



DOOMSDAY WONDERLAND

BOOK 03

Beards And Tails

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Doomsday Wonderland
(末日乐园)
by
Beards And Tails

Synopsis

What if earth devolved into a apocalyptic hellhole? What if you found out you not only have to survive just one apocalyptic event but have to struggle through multiple worlds with different end-world scenarios? And you get to meet more superpowered crazies than you can imagine!

Presenting the worst nightmare that your weird doomsday prepper neighbour with a bunker full of canned beans could have, Doomsday Wonderland is a novel filled with subverted tropes, non-OP characters and a female friendly label which offends all politically correct fanatics.

As 'lucky' humans evolved to posthumans with abilities to adapt to the New World or mutate into disgusting duoluozhongs to survive, follow Lin Sanjiu as she struggle through the multiple challenges to just live one more day... and make sense of this New World that will no longer be the same.

Acknowledgement

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Chapter 201: If You Don't Heed the Advice of Your Elders

This question instantly stirred the hornet's nest. Reno immediately leaped to the side of the elevator, pressing his back against the wall of the elevator. His youthful face was filled with shock, "Didn't you say that?"

Rena reacted in the same way as her brother. Lin Sanjiu didn't know if that perfect coordination was developed through nature or nurture. "Bullshit! If I had said that, would I ask that question?!"

This was probably the first time the siblings encountered such a thing. They looked a little flustered as they turned to the grayish brain beside them unwittingly. Of course, this wasn't because they suspected that she could suddenly speak, but Lin Sanjiu was the only who could see everything in her current form. Lin Sanjiu floated around the space in the elevator for some time but she spelled two words which made all of them anxious, "No one."

There was total silence for a second before Reno grumbled, "That voice belonged to a woman!"

"Yes! I think so too... But why can't we see it? Is it outside the elevator?"

If Lin Sanjiu had her hands, she wanted to hit both of them on the back of their heads. They acted all impressive when they were on the train just because they could see the duoluo zhongs in the train. But, once they encounter this "invisible" intruder, the siblings totally forgot what they were supposed to do—but, this wasn't the time to think about that.

Lin Sanjiu gathered her higher consciousness at the front of her brain and rammed herself against the elevator buttons. The rows of buttons under 20 lit up at once and Lin Sanjiu sighed with relief. As she had regained a portion of her higher consciousness, she was

stronger, so she didn't dare to use her full strength. Thankfully, they weren't in a situation where the other buttons wouldn't work.

"Is the effect of the curse from the almanac over?"

The siblings only thought to react then. Regardless what said those words, if that thing wanted them to go to the 26th floor, it was best to avoid it. Reno scratched his head, realizing that he had lost his cool just now. He coughed and complimented Lin Sanjiu, reservedly, "Um, you did well just now. But honestly, I wasn't afraid."

"I really need to sigh. " Without her body, Lin Sanjiu could only think about this silently.

Even though the kids weren't that reliable because of their lack of experience, they had the basic instinct of every posthuman. When the elevator stopped with a 'ding' on the 15 floor without any weird occurrence, Reno had already called out a page of his almanac while Rena was mumbling something. Her gloves immediately glowed.

[Hehe. We are the State Administration of Press, Publication, Radio, Film and Television (SARFT)]

The name of this organization sounds foreign. In any case, no one in Red Nautilus had ever heard of it before, so they don't know which dimension it is from. However, it seems to have a powerful influence as it can provoke the negative reactions from billions of consumers.

At this stage, it had two parts: 1. [No depiction of body parts below the neck]; 2. [Superstition is banned after the founding of our country].

When part 1 was activated, the target would be treated by the 'SARFT' as a book or any sort of literature. When the target wants to move any part of his/her body below his/her neck, the ability would cause some interference, such the target's movements

would be impeded. During any combat, this can almost be considered a cheat. However, the problems or interference caused by the ability are entirely based on chance. It is advisable that the user first uses a page from her brother's almanac to boost her luck before using this.

Part 2 is specifically used for countering non-human targets, which covers gods and deities to common houseflies. However, the strength of the ability would be dependent on the target. The user can imbue part of her body with this ability so that she can attack non-human entities.

An important thing to note is that if the non-human entity has a very clear concept of himself/herself being born before 1949, part 2 of the ability would be nullified.

The siblings had just prepared themselves when the door slowly opened.

When the door opened, the first thing they saw was the number 15 on the wall. The faded red paint of that number was peeling. A yellow light bulb lit the corridors which were filled with a strong scent of years of cooking oil and the sort of 'unclean' aura which uniquely belonged to old buildings.

However, they didn't see a single duoluo zhong.

"Bro, let's get out, okay?" Rena suddenly blurted, thought she had already stepped out of the elevator. Before she stepped out, she even turned back to look into the elevator a little nervously. The empty elevator, without any passengers, looked like an empty metal box. There wasn't anything out of place. To their surprise, they managed to leave the elevator safely.

The siblings took the grayish brain with them as their footsteps rung out in the empty corridor. The houses along the corridors were all tightly shut. The siblings didn't have any specific goals as they came to this world plainly to train. Not anxious to get anywhere, they checked their surroundings carefully.

Despite having no eyes, using her higher consciousness, an image of the surroundings appeared in Lin Sanjiu mind. She could 'see' everything around her clearly, and perhaps this particular image was even clearer than her own vision. As the image was created using the area she could scan with her higher consciousness, it could show vague outlines of the angles where she may not even see if she had her eyes. At that point, Lin Sanjiu was near a corner of the wall, but she had the weird feeling that there was someone around the corner even though she logically shouldn't see it coming.

Before the siblings unknowingly made the turn at the end of the corridor, the grayish brain suddenly sunk lower to the ground, and rushed forward in a spinning manner. It hit the siblings causing them to stagger. With their enhanced agilities as posthumans, they quickly regained their balance but finally stopped.

"Why did you trip us?" Rena questioned rudely, remembering the punch to her nose.

"There's someone," Lin Sanjiu spelled two big words.

The siblings were startled and exchanged a glance before they peered at the end of the corridor together.

However, it was silent. There wasn't any movement around them. After a few seconds, Rena made a suggestion. She took a small mirror out from the pocket of her Tulle dress and pinched it with the tips of her fingers before she slowly stretched her hand towards the edge of the wall.

The mirror reflected only another dark corridor.

"What? You're just scaring us." Reno suddenly remarked and before Lin Sanjiu could spell another word, he walked over casually. Lin Sanjiu did not have a mouth so she couldn't even yell for him to stop.

Before he disappeared around the corner, nothing unusual

happened...

Rena wanted to follow immediately but the grayish brain blocking her rammed into her shin. She hissed in pain and grabbed her shin.

"What are you doing? I'm getting angry—" Rena frowned furiously and turned to threaten Lin Sanjiu. Suddenly, the grayish brain floated to the air, spinning. It became a long arrow and pointed toward the corner.

Rena immediately turned behind and saw something black peeking out from the corner ahead of them.

It slowly protuded from the corner. That black stuff was just hair on a person's scalp. Rena knew this because she could now see Reno's face. Reno's face was at a 90° angle to his neck as he stuck his head out from the corner of the corridor. His body was still on the other side.

Rena's eyes widened. Before she could shriek, the face which seemed to be dangling in midair, suddenly revealed a smile. Lin Sanjiu had seen that smile many times—it was that perfect, large smile. Then, Reno whispered each word clearly, "Come here."

Chapter 202: Are You F*cking Kidding Me?

Ultimately, Rena screamed and her voice echoed in the corridor. She was standing directly in front of Reno's grinning face, they were almost touching each other's face. Rena quickly backed away from him and nearly tripped. Lin Sanjiu's past 24 hours in Kisaragi Station World were just filled with these constant scares. Now, that she was in a higher consciousness form, she ignored her fear and immediately rammed herself into Reno's face. The momentum threw him backward by more than a meter and he tumbled to the ground.

"What... what happened?" Rena regained her composure and rushed over holding up a fist. She was unsure if she should hit him.

"Ugh! Stop hitting me! It hurts..." Reno suddenly uttered unexpectedly. His head was now in a normal position—as it turned out, he probably used the wall as a support before turning his head at that weird angle. He held his nose and lifted his tear-covered face, "It was just a prank. Why are you guys overreacting?"

The grayish brain paused for a moment in mid-air before it showed the words: "Beat him". Rena howled and pounced on him, pounding his face with her fists of fury while Reno begged her to stop.

"This isn't the right time to create trouble!" Rena sounded angry even though she stopped punching her brother. She kicked her brother hard with her pink Mary Jane shoes, "You're lucky we didn't whack you to death mistaking you for a ghost!"

"Let's forget this happened," Reno was covered in dust. Seeing that the grayish brain seemed to be poising itself for another attack, he quickly changed the subject, "Actually, Lin Sanjiu was right. When I walked around the corner, I felt a presence."

Rena and Lin Sanjiu instantly quietened down. Rena frowned, "A duoluo zhong?"

"I'm not sure..." Reno looked at the corridor cautiously, "I can't see that thing. I only felt it rushing toward me... Do you understand? The feeling when you can't see or touch something, but you just know it's there..."

"When it was about to land on me, my special item helped me block that attack," Reno patted his chest. There seemed to be something under his shirt. "Without this, I don't know what would have happened to me... At that moment, I felt a chill in my bones."

Lin Sanjiu was alarmed by his description. "Was Reno nearly consumed by dark matter? Could the name of this place explain why the siblings are suddenly unable to see the duoluozhongs here?"

Lin Sanjiu was lost in her thoughts when she turned her 'head' and realized that Rena's expression looked a little off. Rena furrowed her brows and appeared doubtful. She looked at the corridor, and at her brother. Somehow, Lin Sanjiu felt that the girl was puzzled by something else.

"Isn't this station called 'The Invisible Place'? It isn't that weird that we can't see them, right?" Before Lin Sanjiu could think more about it, Rena suddenly commented. She spoke as quickly as before and didn't sound any different, "But more importantly, what should we do right now?"

"Since you two have lost your biggest advantage over those duoluozhongs, isn't it obvious?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

However, Reno's reply instantly made Lin Sanjiu feel old.

"Didn't we come here to train ourselves? I find it rather meaningless to fight against those duoluozhongs we can see. It isn't challenging at all. We might as well go home to kill chickens." Reno laughed high-spiritedly. He even had a carefree expression. "Now that there is a bit of challenge, we should take advantage of this! I've decided. Let's stay here tonight. Once we get rid of the duoluozhongs here, I want to go to the 26th floor!"

Rena agreed without any hesitation, as if she was already used to such situations. On the other hand, Lin Sanjiu was so shocked that she nearly lost control over her floating. Even though she spelled "I oppose" and kept the words in mid-air for a long time, the siblings seemed to ignore the opinions of the brain following them and had already started searching for a unit to stay in.

"Alright." Lin Sanjiu could only sigh in her mind bitterly. Anyway, in her current form, those spirits wouldn't even treat her as a threat, so she probably won't get hurt. If those two kids weren't afraid to die, she naturally could go along with their decision.

"Gosh! There are kids in this family, the floor is just covered with toys. How irksome..." After Rena smashed open yet another door, she remarked with disdain from inside the apartment unit. She kicked the door when she walked out while she complained fussily to Lin Sanjiu, "There isn't even a clean apartment unit here!"

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling a little annoyed when the siblings exuded that sort of 'rich-pampered-kids' aura. Lin Sanjiu paid her no heed and continued floating forward. Suddenly, Reno yelled out from the end of the corridor, "Quick! Come here! This unit looks good. It's clearly newly renovated..."

The grayish brain drifted over slowly. Lin Sanjiu wasn't all that concerned about how beautiful the renovations were, but the apartment was surprisingly good. After the lights were switched on, they could see a whole set of new wood furniture, white walls and decorative plastic plants. It looked clean and elegant. The siblings checked the rooms with a well-practiced efficiency—what they called 'pest control'—and they quickly found a supernatural entity under the bed in the children' room. They destroyed the 'bogeyman' under the bed without any hassle.

The siblings had a couple of Special Items like Lin Sanjiu's Teru Teru Bozu, which could warn them about surrounding dangers. However, they were just pieces of black metal and were not in any

sort of doll-like form because anything which resembled humans attracted spirits to possess them. The siblings arranged them around the corners of the room and, finally, their preparation was completed.

For their safety, the siblings decided to move a bed to the living room and decided to take turns keeping watch during the night. In her current form, it was not necessary for Lin Sanjiu to sleep. She floated to the middle of the living room. Reno beat Rena at rock-paper-scissors, so he could go to bed first. Seeing that, Lin Sanjiu decided to meditate and explore the depths of her higher consciousness, planning to train herself the way Mrs. Manas taught her.

Click. Rena switched off the light and sat in darkness under the brain.

Time passed quickly in the dark. Lin Sanjiu training was rather tedious. Firstly, she had to rotate the higher consciousness around her 'nucleus' very quickly. After ensuring that the movements were smooth and fluid, she had to pick and compress two wisps together. This step was very difficult. It was as though she had to push two magnets of the same poles together. The repulsion made her wonder if it was even a legit method. Once she successfully 'pressed' the two wisps of higher consciousness together, a few threads of white smoke would immediately fill up the emptied spaces. This meant that she had generated new higher consciousness.

Of course, at this point, these 'new higher consciousness' was just Lin Sanjiu regaining the higher consciousness she had used up when she activated her [Defence Forcefield]. The additions would only be considered truly new when she had recovered all her expended higher consciousness.

The compressed higher consciousness was stronger and longer-lasting. For example, the uncompressed wisps would only power her [Defence Forcefield] for one minute, whereas the compressed

version which was many times more efficient could easily power her it for 35 minutes.

While Lin Sanjiu delighted in regaining her higher consciousness bit by bit, trying her best to squeeze two wisps of higher consciousness together, she was suddenly startled by an external noise. The wisps of higher consciousness immediately floated away like fishes from a broken net.

That noise wasn't loud. It sounded like a light bump, but somehow she heard it. She looked around her, feeling slightly vexed and a little worried. She didn't know how much time had passed, but the furniture sat silently in the darkness with their dark shadows of all shapes. Rena had her chin on the table; her eyelids sank slowly. Reno was breathing rhythmically while lying on his bed. Apparently, he was fast asleep. The piece of metals which acted as alarms were quiet. Everything seemed normal.

"This is odd. Where was that sound from?" Lin Sanjiu circled the room once. Then, she heard a creak.

This time, Rena quickly stirred. Though her eyes were wide open, she was still in a slight daze. She turned to look at Lin Sanjiu. Evidently, Rena also didn't know where that sound came from.

Then, there was a series of random noise, which seemed to come from the corridor. Lin Sanjiu couldn't stand it any longer. She rapidly spelled, "I'll take a look" and pulled her 'body' into a thin sheet—she already had full control of her shape-shifting. After that, she left through the gap under the door.

The translucent sheet entered the corridor and flew around it a few times. However, everything was normal. The lights were still yellow and the apartments units were shut. Nothing was out of place.

"There's nothing." Lin Sanjiu grumbled to herself after discovering nothing and then headed back. She remembered that the apartment they were staying was the last unit at the end of the

corridor. She turned into a thin sheet and slipped back into the living room from under the door again.

The room looked the same. The beds with metal frames, pulled out by the siblings from their rooms, were in the middle of the living room. To make room for the bed, the sofa and coffee table were pushed aside haphazardly. The black metal alarms were in the corners of the room. The light was switched off, so there was only a bit of light coming through the windows. The dim light showed the outlines of the furniture.

The brain froze in mid-air. It hung there for some time without moving. Finally, Mrs. Manas broke the silence, "What's wrong... Oh? Where are the siblings?"

Lin Sanjiu sighed. There was no one lying on the bed and no one sitting on the chair. The siblings were missing.

Chapter 203: The Chapter With Sounds

The room looked the same, except for the two missing humans. Everything seemed normal—be it the living room, bedrooms and bathroom. Lin Sanjiu had searched the entire apartment but she couldn't find the siblings.

"Even if they were dead, I should see their corpses or they should have become duoluozhongs." Lin Sanjiu couldn't make sense of the current situation. "If they wanted to leave the living room, they would need to walk through the corridors. Yet, I was in the corridors."

Each floor had two L shaped corridors, one to each side of the elevator. It might be possible to miss someone if one person was in the left corridor and the other in the right. However, sounds easily echoed through the corridors there, so Lin Sanjiu would definitely notice if someone came out from the apartment. The only exception would be the case where the siblings used some sort of method to secretly escape without telling her. Lin Sanjiu couldn't understand how they could have just disappeared.

"They did mention yesterday that they would bring a few nameless visas with them whenever they were traveling, just as a precautionary measure. Didn't they say they could give me one so that I could meet them at Red Nautilus?" Lin Sanjiu mumbled to herself. "It isn't logical that they would just suddenly leave..."

But, if they didn't leave based on their own intentions, that would mean that some external force caused them to disappear. However, the alarms did not make any sound. Mrs. Manas was also stumped by this puzzle. Even though they discussed for some time, they were unable to come up with any good conclusions.

"I think I'll go search for them. Maybe, upstairs and downstairs..." Lin Sanjiu said in her head while she slipped out of the door again. She didn't only see the two kids as her guaranteed

ticket to Twelve Worlds Centrum, but in this extremely lonely world, they were also her cherished companions.

If the siblings were in danger, Lin Sanjiu was the only person they could count on now. However, when she entered the corridors once again, there wasn't anything unusual. She could still see that faded 15 under the dim yellow lights. Lin Sanjiu looked at the elevator and immediately decided against using it. She turned and headed to the entrance of the stairway. The stairway of any residential building older than three months were nightmares. As people would only go there to throw their trash, the stairways were poorly maintained. The lights were usually never replaced and the stairs were crazily steep. In the darkness, the stairways looked narrower than they really were. Even the brain, which floated down the stairs, felt uncomfortable.

Perhaps, there was even a stench from the trash, but thankfully, her higher consciousness form did not provide her with the sense of smell. As she could scan the area with her higher consciousness, she only needed a few seconds to check each floor. Furthermore, it didn't take much time to go down 15 stories to reach the ground floor, since she was flying. Unfortunately, she didn't see the siblings even after checking through each floor to the elevator lobby on the ground floor.

"Mrs Manas, if those two children are playing pranks," Lin Sanjiu grumbled as she flew toward the elevator and decided to take a different route this time, "I will knock their nose into their skulls."

The elevator was still on the 15th floor. Lin Sanjiu pressed the button to call the elevator down and it slowly traveled downward. "There must be something wrong with this elevator..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself as she floated on the spot.

Previously, when they were in the elevator, she had pressed a row of buttons. The 15th floor was the first stop, but, she was sure that buttons 16, 17 and the others also lit up. Under normal circumstances, the elevator should continue upward after they got

out. Yet, evidently, the elevator did not move after they got out. It remained on the 15th floor.

While she pondered about it, the elevator arrived with a 'ding'. The doors opened, revealing the elevator with its white light. The brain drifted into the elevator and a small finger-like tip pressed on the button '16'. The elevator traveled upward after the door closed.

As the numbers increased in a normal sequential order, nothing happened, even though Lin Sanjiu was expecting some sort of abnormal occurrence. It acted like a normal elevator and stopped with a 'ding'.

However, the number on the wall was 15.

There was someone on the 15th floor!

Lin Sanjiu raised her guard and gathered her higher consciousness. She quickly floated to the top corner of the elevator and watched nervously as the doors opened.

"Huh?"

Lin Sanjiu noticed a sparkling pink wig as the elevator doors cracked open. Next, Rena's eyes widened while Reno remarked loudly, "Hey! Look, isn't she here?!" This immediately played out in the image that Lin Sanjiu saw in her head.

"Where did you run off to?!" Rena jumped into the elevator, she was ready to poke the brain with her fingers covered with colorful nail polish. "Weren't you supposed to check the noise? Why didn't you come back? We thought something happened to you. So, you just went downstairs to play!"

Lin Sanjiu, who took quite a while to understand what the girl meant, was so frustrated that she could vomit blood. When she saw Reno nodding his head in agreement, she furiously spelled the words: 'I was looking for you both. You two disappeared'. This was the first time Lin Sanjiu spelled so many words.

"No, you were the one who disappeared! Aren't we standing

here?!" Rena didn't stop attempting to poke Lin Sanjiu, forcing the brain to evade her while hiding in the corner of the elevator, "I didn't see you so I asked my brother to look for you!"

Lin Sanjiu sighed a breath of relief but was still puzzled by all this. She wondered if she lost track of time and incidentally missed the siblings. But why didn't she hear them walking out?

After a difficult time avoiding Rena's sharp fingernails, Lin Sanjiu followed behind the siblings and returned to the apartment unit, still feeling very perplexed. The apartment unit was exactly the same as when she left.

"It's just a false alarm," Reno commented as he lay comfortably in his bed but was pulled up by his sister.

"It's your shift now!"

He only remembered that after being reminded, and then dragged his feet and sat on the chair under the grayish brain. By the looks of it, nothing had changed. After Lin Sanjiu asked Reno 'how long did you wait for me', she couldn't concentrate on her training any longer because this incident did not make sense.

"Since you are just a brain, we thought nothing would happen to you, so we started playing cards. Erm... I can't really tell how long we waited for you exactly. But, we waited for at least an hour," Reno replied. Even though she might have lost track of time, Lin Sanjiu was sure she was only outside for less than half an hour.

"Is there some sort of time warp in Kisaragi Station World? Could we be in a pocket dimension?"

But if this was a pocket dimension, it was too quiet. Lin Sanjiu thought for a long time, but she couldn't come up with an explanation. The living room became silent again. The night in this world seemed to last for a long time, as if dawn would never come.

When Reno could no longer endure his sleepiness, he fell asleep

in his chair. Lin Sanjiu, the only one who was still wide awake, couldn't help wandering in and out of the apartment unit. She harrassed Mrs. Manas in her mind, trying to understand the entire situation. However, they weren't able to come up with anything even after their discussions. In the end, Mrs. Manas had been pestered too much and started acting dead. After she stopped replying to Lin Sanjiu, the latter entered the bathroom moodily and switched on the light.

Anyway, she found the siblings, so it didn't really matter if she couldn't figure out what had happened. Lin Sanjiu thought about it for a little longer and decided to give up. She flew straight into the bathtub and converted her corpse back into its original form. She moved to the tap. As she had nothing to do now, she decided to wash her corpse.

If she thought about it optimistically, she would still need to use that body in the future. She gathered her higher consciousness and turned into a shape of a thumb and an index finger. It was harder than spelling words. After some effort, Lin Sanjiu placed the two weird-looking fingers on the tap. Suddenly, she heard a flushing sound from the bathroom upstairs.

Chapter 204: She Quickly Familiarized Herself With the Transom Window

Lin Sanjiu knew that she wasn't known for her intelligence. However, if she knew that they would end up in that situation, she would have rushed out of the bathroom to kill the person who was fast asleep outside when she heard the flushing sounds from the bathroom upstairs.

Right now, she had already been trapped in that residential apartment for close to ten days. The word 'trapped' wasn't quite right. If Lin Sanjiu could steel herself, she could just fly out from the window because she wasn't imprisoned by anyone or anything. Outside the window, Kisaragi Station World stretched out boundless under the gray skies.

Yet, she couldn't leave. One of the reasons why she couldn't leave walked up to her. The girl whispered to Lin Sanjiu softly, "I already asked him to make something to eat." Rena pursed her lips and looked gloomy. The stress she felt over these few days had caused a few pimples to appear on her usually smooth skin.

As she spoke, Reno hummed as he entered the kitchen.

"When should we kill him?" Rena asked. After that, the teenage girl bit her lips, trying her best to control her hands, which trembled every now and then.

Lin Sanjiu, in her brain form, wished to just let out a long sigh. Everything began from the night when she heard the flushing sound.

On that night, fourteen days ago, when Lin Sanjiu heard that sound through the thin ceilings, her 'fingers' froze. She had always assumed that there was no one else in this building. However, if she thought about it carefully, none of them had gone past the 15th

floor. It was possible that there were survivors living upstairs. After all, spirits wouldn't have to use toilet bowls.

Lin Sanjiu thought about it for a moment and decided to go upstairs to have a look. Anyway, she was just a 'brain spirit' right now, so only duoluo zhongs and people who had their eyes corroded by black matter could see her. She might as well take advantage of this worry-free form and make use of the freedom she had.

After making that decision, she immediately turned and flew out of the transom window. However, after she flew just a few meters upward and was about to reach the 16th floor, she heard a sudden sound of footsteps from the floor below. She heard the door opening and realized that one of the siblings had entered the bathroom.

Lin Sanjiu was startled, she suddenly remembered that her body was still in the bathtub downstairs. If it just scared the siblings, it wouldn't be that much of an issue. However, it would be troublesome if the kids threw her body out of the building impulsively!

At that moment, Lin Sanjiu couldn't care to look through the window of the bathroom on the 16th floor. She sped back through the transom window and found herself facing Reno, who had just walked into the bathroom. The teenager was staring speechlessly at the body in the bathtub.

'That's me', Lin Sanjiu quickly spelled. Before he could react, she immediately turned her body back into a card.

"Ah... Ah..." Reno uttered for some time with his mouth wide opened before he managed to say something. "You... you? You? That's you?" His first few words were quite useless. After he sorted his thoughts for a few seconds, he blurted out a few important questions, "Isn't that a corpse? Where did you place it? Are you dead? Are you a spirit?"

If Lin Sanjiu were to tell him everything from the start, it would take so long that it'd be dawn. Lin Sanjiu considered for a moment and gave him a simple reply: 'I'll tell you next time'. Then, she flew out of the transom window once more. It was only then that he realized that the grayish brain had squeezed itself into the bathroom through the window. "Hey, where are you going? Why are you running off by yourself again?" he asked urgently.

Judging from his expression, Lin Sanjiu instantly felt like a dog which had been adopted by some kids. She hesitated and replied him by spelling: 'Someone upstairs'. While Reno stood in a daze, thinking about the meaning of her words, Lin Sanjiu had already slipped out skillfully from the window once again.

As with most residential buildings, the unit above usually had the same layout as the unit below. The brain which had flown out from the bathroom window of the 15th floor would naturally end up in the bathroom of the unit above.

The bathroom on the 16th floor was totally dark. The person who used the toilet had obviously finished his or her business and left after switching off the lights.

"Are there really survivors here? " Lin Sanjiu thought to herself as she squeezed in from the window.

Compared to the other places in this world, though there seemed to be less activity in this building, there were many things suspicious about it. Ignoring the rest of the weird occurrences, there was certainly something very wrong with the elevator. If there were any survivors living here in such a devil-may-care manner, they would immediately be targeted by those spirits, wouldn't they?

The door of the bathroom was slightly ajar. Lin Sanjiu tilted her 'body' to a side and glided out from the bathroom, almost like a ballet dancer.

As expected, the layout of this unit was exactly like the one

below. After she came out from the bathroom, she found herself in a corridor which led to the living room. There were also two bedrooms to her left. As the lights were switched off, she could only see the shadows and the outlines of the furniture.

Even though her higher consciousness acted as her eyes and ears, and it constantly scanned the surroundings around her, it was also affected by the amount of light in the environment. The clarity of the image Lin Sanjiu could 'see' was only slightly better than her normal eyes.

When she looked around, floating immediately outside the entrance of the bathroom, she could only see a vaguely familiar figure in the middle of the living room from the image in her mind.

However, that was enough. When Lin Sanjiu realized what it was, she was instantly stunned. For a split second, she stopped moving.

She saw a bed. There was a bed in the middle of the room, and the sofa and coffee table beside it had been pushed aside. Not only did it look exactly like the bed that the siblings pulled out. The person sleeping on it was the same. Lin Sanjiu recognized her at once.

"Lin Sanjiu, where did you go again?"

Rena, who had bundled herself in the bed, quickly jumped up when she saw the grayish brain floating outside the bathroom. The girl even sounded on the verge of tears. When the teenager rushed toward her, Lin Sanjiu realized that there were tears at the corner of Rena's eyes. "I thought something bad happened to you. My brother went out to look for you, but neither of you returned. I waited until now. Everywhere feels creepy, but I can't see them... Please say something. Did you see my brother?"

Lin Sanjiu was shocked. " If Rena is in front of me, who is the person downstairs?"

Chapter 205: It Gets Confusing Here

"No, this isn't right." Lin Sanjiu floated backward, creating a distance between herself and the girl. She scrutinized the girl in front of her from head to bottom. "Is she a human?" Lin Sanjiu was uncertain.

"What are you thinking? Have you seen my brother?" Rena stamped her feet anxiously, as her accessories jangled noisily. "He went out to look for you!"

Lin Sanjiu paused for a moment; she wasn't in a hurry to reply. Instead, she first spelled four words: "Start from the beginning".

"Based on Rena's temper, would she plainly accept my question dodging?" Lin Sanjiu wondered to herself, feeling a bit uncertain. She knew that predicting someone's reaction to a situation based on how they usually behave was not reliable at all as humans were too complex.

Proving that point, the Rena standing in front of her suddenly sighed and recounted everything from the beginning.

"You went out to investigate the noise in the corridor, right? That was hours ago! 20 minutes after you left, I sensed that something was wrong. It's just a corridor. You wouldn't need that much time... I wanted to go out to check on you, so I woke my brother up." Rena gulped, looking extremely worried. "I walked around the corridor and didn't find you. He insisted on searching for you... He hasn't returned since."

Then, the girl sighed, "As he didn't return after more than 15 minutes, I went out to look for both of you a couple of times. But, I didn't meet any of you. I was worried that you guys might think I left... so I decided to wait here alone."

Lin Sanjiu listened in a daze, and without thinking about critical details, she quickly spelled: "Did you go downstairs?"

"I did. Not only did I go one floor down to the 14th floor, but I also went all the way to the lobby on the ground floor. I even went upstairs. I went to the roof and found nothing..." Rena appeared dispirited as she collapsed into the chair in the living room. It was then that Lin Sanjiu noticed a streak of dirt on Rena's white socks. By the looks of it, it probably got there when the girl was in the narrow stairways.

If Rena entered the stairways 30 minutes after Lin Sanjiu left, it was possible that they might have missed each other. "No, no. One floor down isn't the 14th floor. Isn't this the 16th floor?"

Lin Sanjiu got the answer to her question very quickly. When she left the apartment with 'this' Rena, she saw the number 15 on the corridor, the same faded 15.

The gray brain floated in midair, a little at a loss as to what to do next.

"Did the numbers change? But why is the unit above exactly the same as the one below?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself, with her mind in a jumble. She clenched her teeth, not willing to think about it, and spelled out to Rena, "Follow me". She flew into the stairway, leading the way. It didn't matter who was real or fake, they had to meet each other before they could figure things out!

Lin Sanjiu could hear the sounds of Rena's accessories as the girl followed closely. After they ran down a flight of stairs, they reached the floor below them.

Sure enough, the floor below them was the 14th floor. Lin Sanjiu stared at the red "14" on the way for half a second. Then, she rushed to the apartment unit at the end of the corridor. However, she found a locked, unfamiliar door. There was dust all over it, as if no one had touched it for a long time.

The gray brain remained in front of the door, unable to piece together what had actually happened. "Where is Reno?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

"What are you doing? I already searched the 14th floor, there's nothing here!" Rena said standing behind Lin Sanjiu. Rena sounded less anxious than before, probably because Lin Sanjiu was with her, "Maybe, my brother is playing a prank on us again! But, I really hate it when he disregards the situations we are in and jokes around like this. He doesn't take things seriously at all!"

"Huh?" Even though Mrs. Manas was one step behind Lin Sanjiu, the teacher realized that the events were unfolding in a very strange manner. But before she could say anything else, Lin Sanjiu shouted angrily in her mind, "Don't make any sound!"

Mrs. Manas immediately cooperated and kept quiet. Lin Sanjiu instantly looked at Rena, trying to observe the girl's expression. The girl was pacing fretfully and didn't show any suspicious expression, at least she didn't look like she heard Mrs. Manas.

"But what can this prove? There are all sorts of duoluozhongs in this world." Thinking, Lin Sanjiu spelled two words: "Pocket Dimension?"

This was the only reason that Lin Sanjiu could think of.

"No, it isn't." Rena gave a long sigh. "Pocket Dimension is something that 'develops' from the apocalyptic world they belong to. Have you seen conjoined tangerines, where there is a small tangerine stuck to a normal-sized tangerine? A pocket dimension and its world has a similar relationship. Essentially, they are the same thing... That is to say, it can be detected."

"I've checked, this isn't a Pocket Dimension," the girl muttered, leaning her back against the wall, she crouched on the ground, "I'm sure my brother must be acting crazy again."

To be honest, considering how the girl could explain the Pocket Dimensions so efficiently, Lin Sanjiu was a little convinced that the teenage girl by her side was the real Rena. However, Lin Sanjiu was clearer than anyone that Reno wasn't acting crazy. In fact, Reno might be in the greatest danger ever since he arrived at Kisaragi

Station.

"I've seen him," Lin Sanjiu rapidly spelled out. As she was more or less convinced that she was with the real Rena, she decided not to hide anything. "He was with you."

Her last sentence was certainly confusing. Rena immediately gave Lin Sanjiu a puzzled look. Lin Sanjiu was just about to add 'another you' when they heard an angry voice coming from the far end of the corridor.

"Rena! Damn you! Why are you two hanging out here!"

A head peeked from the bend of the corridor—under his fluffy and slightly messy hair, a teenage boy raged. "I looked for you both from the top floor to the lobby so many times! I'm freaking tired now! Are you two making a fool of me!" Reno scolded, panting as he walked to them. He did look like he had just walked out from the stairway.

"Ah!" Rena remarked and quickly refuted. The siblings started bickering rapidly.

"How dare you! You're the one who didn't return!"

"What are you saying? When I went back, there was no one. That was why I came out to search for you guys!"

"No way! You must have gone to the wrong place..."

"Did you get stuck in the toilet!?"

After the siblings quarreled for some time, they suddenly noticed that the gray brain which had remained silent all this time did not follow them. It was still in the same spot.

"Lin Sanjiu, what's wrong?" Rena laughed, "Let's go!"

Lin Sanjiu did not move, "Is he really Reno?"

Chapter 206: They are Indeed Themselves

If Lin Sanjiu really wanted to verify the identity of this Reno, she knew what she had to do. She flew toward the siblings and put herself between Reno and Rena, pretending that it was unintentional. Rena was annoyed that she had to tilt her head to look past Lin Sanjiu just to see where she was going that she kept grumbling. However, Lin Sanjiu didn't care. She followed the siblings up to the 15th floor—which was where Lin Sanjiu found Rena just minutes ago, and what she assumed was the 16th floor.

To be honest, she wasn't quite sure which floor was which now.

When they opened the door to the apartment unit, Lin Sanjiu saw the familiar dimly lit living room with a little light pouring in through the windows.

Reno reached for the light switch casually and asked, "Why didn't you switch on the lights?"

"Yeah? Why did Rena sit alone in the darkness when she was waiting for us? If she was a little scared, wouldn't it be better to switch on the light?" Just as this thought surfaced, Lin Sanjiu heard Rena complaining, "And you said this was a good apartment, the lights are spoiled!"

Click. Click. Click. Reno tried the switch a few times but the ceiling light remained dark.

"Isn't this too much of a coincidence?" Lin Sanjiu suddenly grew suspicious.

They weren't that concerned that the light bulb had fused as they had some level of enhanced night vision as posthumans. After a troubling night, the two humans and a brain no longer had the mood to sleep. They sat cross-legged in a circle on the bed and starting chatting.

"I think there is something weird about this building," Reno

stroked his nose, maintaining his non-serious attitude, "But, I don't understand we can't see them."

"Weird is an understatement," Lin Sanjiu thought quietly to herself. "Right now, I can't even be sure if either one of you is something else entirely..."

If Lin Sanjiu wanted to figure out if they were imposters, there was no way she could use the 'ask a question only the real person knows' method. After all, she got acquainted with the siblings not long ago, so there was no way she was going to know what questions to ask them. Furthermore, she didn't know who to trust and who to suspect. But, there was certainly one thing that could determine their identities and allow them to prove themselves.

When the siblings were bickering and discussing, Rena noticed the gray brain by their side with her sharper intuition. After Lin Sanjiu had regained more higher consciousness over time, her brain form had become larger. At some portions, a skull seemed to be forming. With more 'materials', Lin Sanjiu could write longer sentences.

At that moment, Lin Sanjiu spelled the words: "Can you two activate your abilities now?"

"Why? Everything seems fine," Rena did not expect Lin Sanjiu to make such a request, and her brows slowly furrowed, "I can only activate my ability with a target, who should I use it on?"

Lin Sanjiu already thought about this question. Reno's almanac ability would affect his target with a 'curse'. Even though it was dangerous, that would only work if there are enemies who would hurt her. With her current 'body', no duoluo zhong would attack her, so it shouldn't be a problem if she received another 'curse'. Meanwhile, Rena's [No depiction of body parts below the neck] could be used on Reno. If she was the real thing, she wouldn't use her full strength. If she was a fake, she wouldn't be able to activate that ability.

After thinking for a while, Lin Sanjiu figured there wasn't anything wrong with the plan. She immediately spelled out the plan tediously for the siblings. Even though the siblings were confused, they jumped off the bed and acquiesced. They didn't follow her instructions because they were sensible but rather because they found it entertaining. While Lin Sanjiu tried her best to ensure that nothing would go wrong, Rena had already thrown Reno to the ground many times, laughing out loud.

Actually, the fact that Reno could be hit by Rena's [No depiction of body parts below the neck] already proved that he was a human being. Lin Sanjiu let out a sigh of relief. At the same time, countless questions surfaced in her head. If both of them were living human beings, the 'people' in the first 15th floor she went to were all not humans!

Thinking about that sent shivers down her non-existent spine, but she was glad. If she wasn't in her current form, those two things would have targeted her there and then.

"If that is the case, there is another issue. Why did those two things impersonate the siblings?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. She decided to think about that later.

Seeing that the two kids had already caused enough trouble, she floated toward Reno to receive his attack. But just then, the teenage boy, who had been flung so many times he couldn't get up, shouted, "Rena! You better don't overdo it!" Lin Sanjiu suddenly felt that things were going to awry. Before she could fly over to stop him, she saw a yellow paper whirring in the air. It hit Rena and then disappeared with a swoosh.

The attacked landed. The three of them fell silent for a second.

Rena froze on the spot for some time before she could react, "Hey, what did you do to me?"

From Reno's expression, he apparently activated the ability by accident. He stared at his sister a little vacuously and took out the

carbon copy of that almanac page. When he saw what was on it, he turned a little pale.

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling anxious and worried. She secretly prayed that the 'curse' wasn't too serious as there were two other 'things' in the same building.

"Tell me!" Rena said anxiously as she also sensed that something was wrong.

Reno looked at his sister and then at Lin Sanjiu before sighing, "I think you shouldn't move around in the next few hours. My almanac attacks are strong, but I had no idea you would get this..."

With that, he showed his sister and Lin Sanjiu the paper in his hand.

"Energies for the day make it unsuitable for going out, meeting friends, being in the dark, using electronics, exercising, wearing accessories, being with others. Suitable for funerals."

It was only then that Lin Sanjiu realized how lucky she was when she was hit by the teenager's attack. After reading that, Rena's face turned white as a sheet. Since she grew up with her brother, she knew her brother's ability very well. She sat on the bed and started removing her accessories one by one, "How can I get the worst one with a single draw! What kind of grudge do you have against me, Reno! Look, I don't dare to do anything now!"

This particular page was totally different from Lin Sanjiu's. If Lin Sanjiu's curse gave her bad luck, this was definitely a very lethal curse. Not only must the target avoid doing anything stated as "unsuitable", it also created the possibility of a "self-fulfilled prophecy".

Once that happened, the energies would definitely be suitable for a funeral.

Right now, they had to act according to the almanac so that they could ensure Rena's safety. After Reno left his sister with a [Self-

glowing wicker lantern], he opened the door and went into the corridor with Lin Sanjiu.

Lin Sanjiu suggested they guarded the entrance for a night. Unfortunately, Reno started to display his 'spoilt brat' behavior.

"Isn't there another apartment in front of us? If I sit on this ceramic floor all night, my bones are going to hurt." After saying that, he smashed open the door of the apartment stubbornly and entered it.

Lin Sanjiu didn't really mind as she didn't need to sleep. However, she couldn't help being worried for both of them in different apartment units. After flying a few times between the two apartment units and checking that everything was fine, she found a corner in the corridor and started training again.

Her training was tedious so it required her full attention. Once she entered that state, she would lose track of time in the outside world. When Lin Sanjiu felt that she had fully regained her higher consciousness and that it even grew a little, Lin Sanjiu finally stopped. Right now, the structure of her brain was completed with all the parts fully developed. A skull had started forming, though the facial structure had not fully appeared. If her higher consciousness granted her a bit of color, she could seriously scare many girls if she floated around like that.

However, Lin Sanjiu was unsatisfied. Considering this speed, she didn't know when she would have a mouth. She had to find another method to inform the siblings about what she experienced so they wouldn't fall into another trap. Just as she was considering what to do, she heard a click. Reno opened his door.

Reno stood at the door and looked at Lin Sanjiu with a grim, serious expression. "I have a question. Why did you ask us to activate our abilities?" Reno whispered intentionally, as if afraid that the person in the other apartment unit would hear him. Before Lin Sanjiu could reply, he spoke again. Evidently, he had

already guessed the answer, "Do you suspect that one of us is an imposter?"

When Lin Sanjiu was still thinking about her answer, Reno stepped forward and said quietly, "I think that is not my sister."

Chapter 207: The Other Me In This World. Is This Phrase Still Romantic?

"I can't really say what I find suspicious," the teenager said grimly, revealing a hint of helplessness about the situation. He bit his lip and continued at an almost inaudible level, "Anyway, I feel that the person inside isn't my sister."

As echoes were unavoidable if they were in the corridor, Lin Sanjiu and Reno entered the apartment unit opposite from the one where "Rena" was, to avoid her overhearing them. Reno closed the door shut, but he continued to whisper.

Lin Sanjiu was puzzled and quickly spelled: "But she used her ability". After she recovered all her higher consciousness, not only had her form become larger, but she could also spell a lot more proficiently. Reno hesitated for some time; he seemed unable to explain that point.

"Erm... Yes, I fell a few times," he somewhat admitted. "But we can't exactly infer that it was my sister's ability. I did fall to the ground, but the other party could have used some other ability or special item... Don't forget, if posthumans from other worlds die here. They will still retain their evolved abilities."

"That's true." Lin Sanjiu couldn't help remembering that one of the girls she met in Garden of Eden had the ability to force someone to fall. If a posthuman with a similar ability died and became a duoluo zhong in Kisaragi Station World and used that ability to pose as Rena, it would be hard to distinguish.

Luckily, Reno's ability was rare. Once he drew out that almanac page, it basically confirmed his identity.

"Why do you suspect her?" Lin Sanjiu processed her thoughts and simplified her question.

"I don't know if I should call it intuition... We grew up together

so we know each other very well. After she was hit by that almanac page, I chatted with her. That was when it became more and more obvious to me that I was speaking to someone else who was trying its best to imitate my sister's personality and behavior."

Lin Sanjiu tried her best to remember the details but she didn't find Rena's behavior any different from usual. Then again, she had only known Rena for a short time.

"I didn't have that feeling when we were play-fighting. But thinking back, I have to say that it was right to use my ability." Reno exhaled. "I wanted to say this earlier but I have no idea what is happening on the other side so I wanted to wait for a few hours first. Not only can we lower that person's guard, I also noticed that you have been changing and was busy with something... So, I waited until now.

Lin Sanjiu had witnessed too many weird things happening that night and was a little confused by everything. However, she was certain about one thing. The person that could use [Did you check your almanac before leaving your house today?] was the real Reno. With that in mind, she quickly spelled, "Make a mark on yourself."

Even though Reno usually showed a carefree attitude, he picked things up quickly and understood almost immediately, "You're afraid that someone might pretend to be me?"

His face turned pale thinking of that possibility. He took a ceramic bowl from the kitchen and quickly broke it into two silently by using his hands. He took the sharp edge of the broken ceramic bowl and carved a small "X" on his inner wrist.

"That should be enough..." Reno looked at the mark he made on his hand and put aside the broken bowl. Just then, a voice came from the door, "What are you two doing?"

The girl's voice startled them so much, it was as if their whole surrounding shook. Rena slowly looked in from the front door. She was standing in the shadow by the entrance so the expression of

her face couldn't be seen clearly.

Both Lin Sanjiu and Reno were shocked. There was a wall in front of the entrance which blocked the view from the entrance, but also prevented them from seeing what was at the entrance. Lin Sanjiu and Reno exchanged glances. None of them expected that the "Rena" without any accessories could move around so silently.

"Oh, nothing. We are telling each other ghost stories," Reno instantly laughed, pretending that nothing happened. "You really get that feeling when you're telling ghost stories in the dark in Kisaragi Station World.

"Rena" slowly walked in. She scanned Lin Sanjiu suspiciously, "How can she tell you any stories in that form?"

Lin Sanjiu observed Rena from head to toe without replying. The girl was wearing a sparkling, pink wig. Her Tulle dress was in a mess. She also had that slightly proud tilted chin... She seemed exactly the same, be it in appearance or attitude.

"It is hard to believe that she isn't the real thing." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

"I am the one who mainly does the telling. She listens." Reno didn't want to continue with this excuse that was full of loopholes. He also seemed to be unsure of the identity of the person in front. He quickly changed the subject, "Is the effect from the Almanac over? Maybe, you should continue lying down for a while. Just to be sure."

"It's not necessary," Rena played it down by waving her hands, almost as if she didn't care, "I think the effect ended. This place is really boring. Bro, could you play cards with me?"

Reno pressed the mark on his inner wrist subconsciously, he hemmed and hawed for a little while but couldn't come up with an excuse. When he saw Rena's expression turning more and more doubtful, he finally acceded, "Ah, okay."

"This could be an opportunity to turn things around." Lin Sanjiu thought. She sneaked behind Rena, and stayed where the girl couldn't see her and spelled: "Can you manage this alone?"

Reno looked at the words, trying to guess her intentions. Then, he nodded his head subtly.

"Great!" Lin Sanjiu turned and sped out of the door before the siblings in the living room noticed.

"If the Rena here was an imposter, the real Rena must be somewhere in this building." Besides, Lin Sanjiu was still brooding over the 'siblings' she saw when she first reached the 15th floor. Now that Reno had a mark on his hand, she could investigate and look for the real Rena at the same time.

However, Lin Sanjiu never guessed that she would find another Rena so quickly.

The floor below the current 15th floor was still the 14th floor (that she saw with Rena). Lin Sanjiu almost wondered if she was imagining things. But, she quickly realized that something was wrong. After she flew down another two floors, it should be the 12th floor, but she saw the siblings playing cards in the corridor under the "15" which was painted on the wall.

Another 15th floor and another pair of siblings.

Chapter 208: That's Not My Sister!!

"Wait. Let me make sense of things..." Mrs. Manas' slightly frantic voice buzzed. Following which, a few lines appeared on the blackboard of Lin Sanjiu's [School of Higher Consciousness] with a scratching sound. That was the first time the blackboard had been used in this manner since it was created.

The few lines showed a simplified drawing of a building. The crude drawing was basically of two horizontal lines with multiple vertical lines in between. Each cell was labeled with a number indicating the floors. However, when Lin Sanjiu and Mrs. Manas were trying to place the numbers representing each floor, they found themselves in quite a conundrum.

"There are a total of 30 floors according to the buttons in the elevator. Logically, that would be 1 to 30. But..." The white words on the board stopped appearing for a moment, "When did the numbers get jumbled up?"

Lin Sanjiu gave a wry smile inwardly.

When she saw a second pair of 'siblings on the 15th floor', she immediately stopped herself from flying forward. Before the siblings saw her, she left in the opposite direction. Which pair of siblings was the real deal? Where was the real 15th floor? She was completely baffled.

At the start, Lin Sanjiu remembered an experiment she had heard about before the apocalypse. Using a unique slope for the stairway, the person climbing up the stairs would have an illusion they were climbing up an unending staircase. If someone designed the stairway in that manner from 15th floor onward, it was possible that when Lin Sanjiu walked downward, she was actually flying upward. Thus, returning to the same 15th floor. However, she quickly dismissed that illogical explanation.

She turned back and flew back to the original 15th floor—where

Rena was hit by Reno's almanac page. Though the siblings on this floor were also playing cards, they were in the apartment unit and not in the corridor. This scene showed that there was clearly a problem but Lin Sanjiu didn't want to accept this. Afraid that this was one of Reno's prank, she purposely broke the glass of the fire hydrant cabinet in the corridor of that floor to mark that location before flying out.

She flew out of the window so that she was outside the building. She flew two floors down and rushed in again. Lin Sanjiu found herself speechless.

After using three ways to distinguish her previous location, she saw the same '15' on the wall. There was also a similar pair of siblings playing cards. However, the glass of the fire hydrant cabinet was not broken here. That indicated that there were really two 15th floors and two pairs of siblings.

Lin Sanjiu also tried to fly up from the ground floor, counting 15 floors. This was supposed to be a surefire way of reaching the real 15th floor. Unfortunately, she discovered after trying twice that the 15th floor was a little different each time she entered the building.

Furthermore, these two 15th floors were accompanied by a segment of corresponding 16, 17th floors or 13, 14th floors. Lin Sanjiu couldn't even identify the real 15th floor, much less distinguish between the set of siblings who looked exactly the same.

"In any case, the Reno here isn't the real thing, right? He doesn't have a mark." Mrs. Manas was so absorbed in this situation that she had forgotten. Lin Sanjiu was worried but Mrs. Manas seemed to be just a popcorn audience, "You're lucky that you are in your higher consciousness form. No matter what sort of ghost haunting this is, they can't hurt you."

Apparently, Mrs. Manas had already set up her mind that her

role as a nurturer only applied to Lin Sanjiu alone.

"You're right," Lin Sanjiu didn't want to respond to the second-half of what the teacher said, "I saw with my own eyes that the Reno with the mark used his almanac ability. He shouldn't be an imposter." Even though Lin Sanjiu could not confirm Rena's identity, she was glad that at least she knew who the real Reno was. Considering that this thing in front of her had seen her dead body and was nearly in the position to misuse it, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling some lingering fear. However, she couldn't exactly attack immediately even though she already recognized that it was an imposter.

If the Rena beside him was real, she would still think the imposter was her brother. Thus, she wouldn't allow Lin Sanjiu to attack her brother for no reason. If that Rena was an imposter, it would protect its companion. That is to say, Lin Sanjiu had to attack the Reno (with no mark on his wrist) while Rena was not around. Otherwise, she had to confirm the identity of this Rena before she made any plans.

"Regardless, I have to act normal..." Lin Sanjiu floated into the corridor, acting nonchalant.

Rena, who was frowning as she held a card, immediately lit up when she saw Lin Sanjiu. "This Lin Sanjiu is back!" she chuckled. When the 'Reno' turned to look at Lin Sanjiu, the girl secretly swapped the card in her hand.

"If she does that, she should be the real deal?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself with some uncertainty.

"Why did you disappear all of a sudden?" After this 'Reno' looked at her with the same cheerful, composed attitude, he even yawned a few times, lazily. He grumbled, "Isn't it just fine that the 'curse' is over? Why did you force me to play cards with you..."

Lin Sanjiu hesitated, thinking, "Did the events play out differently on this floor?"

Before Lin Sanjiu, who was now beside the siblings, could think further, Rena asked, "Where did you go just now?"

Giving it some thought, Lin Sanjiu replied with a simple: "Took a walk".

No matter what those imposters were, they probably couldn't affect or harm her. Lin Sanjiu decided to use this advantage.

"You're bored too?" Rena threw a sidelong glance at 'Reno', "I don't know what that coward is afraid of. He probably felt a cold breeze and started being paranoid... Look, we've stayed here for almost a night, yet nothing happened. I am so bored."

"Well, something did happen but you're unaware," Mrs. Manas mumbled from Lin Sanjiu's mind. Oddly, Reno did not retaliate after hearing what Rena said. Instead, he gave Lin Sanjiu an odd look. Before this whole shenanigans, the siblings would have argued there and then... The more Reno was able to hold back his temper, the more suspicious he seemed.

Seeing that he did not respond, Rena seemed a little embarrassed by her actions. She mumbled something before the teenage boy asked, "Did you drop an ear stud?"

Rena suddenly froze. Lin Sanjiu was also stunned. Rena wore too many little accessories. If she took them all off, she could probably decorate a Christmas tree with them. It was quite extraordinary that Reno would actually notice that detail.

"If he could point that out, is he the real Reno?"

"The shiny one made of rhinestones that looks a little like a pink starfish... Didn't you like that pair of earrings very much?" Reno crooked his head and looked at the girl's left ear. Actually, there were already many other crystal earrings on Rena's left ear, and it was hard to differentiate between them. If the girl did lose an earring, Lin Sanjiu wouldn't even notice.

"Oh, yes!" Rena touched her ear and jumped up, "I must have

dropped it that time when removing or wearing my accessories back again!"

"It might be under the bed," Reno said casually while he looked at his cards with a seemingly disinterested expression. "You don't mind losing it?"

"Pui! How dare you say that when it's all your fault," Rena stood up and complained. She turned around and opened the door of the renovated apartment unit before entering to look for her earrings. When she walked past Lin Sanjiu, Lin Sanjiu noticed that the white socks that the girl was wearing were clean, through the image created by her higher consciousness. There wasn't a streak of dirt.

She intuitively sensed that something was wrong. If she thought carefully, the events that happened in between must be different. The Rena with the dirtied sock was upstairs. Whereas, this Rena had never searched for anyone climbing through the stairways.

"It doesn't help if I know this..." Lin Sanjiu thought. Just as Rena stepped into the other apartment, Reno rushed forward.

"Is he going to attack now?" Lin Sanjiu was alarmed and quickly backed away. It was only at that moment that she realized that he wasn't going to attack her. Instead, he was showing her a strip of paper on his hand.

"That's not my sister!!" were the words that the teenager scribbled on the piece of paper. The exclamation marks were bolded and emphasized. It was quite shocking.

Chapter 209: We Can Clear the Confusion With a Fight

"To make things clearer, let's call the Reno with a mark on his wrist, Reno 1. We'll call the Reno by your side, Reno 2. The Rena upstairs—with the dirtied sock—would be Rena 1, and the one with the clean socks would be Rena 2."

Chalk drawings of four small human figures appeared on the blackboard within the building. Two of the figures were upstairs and two were downstairs. They each were labeled with their names and number.

"You saw Reno 2 and Rena 2 when the elevator first opened after you went to the ground floor to look for them. Reno 2 also saw your dead body in the bathtub. You heard a flushing sound, so you rushed upstairs. You met Reno 1 and Rena 1. They both used their abilities."

"You have some suspicion about Rena 1's ability, so we can't confirm she is the real Rena. But, right now, we are sure that Reno 1 is definitely the real Reno since his [Did you check your almanac before leaving your house today?] is a very rare ability. Is this right?" Mrs. Manas asked after organization the information they had.

"Yes," Lin Sanjiu replied immediately.

Mrs. Manas kept quiet as if she was deep in thought. Seeing that, Lin Sanjiu pulled herself out of her [School of Higher Consciousness]. Looking around, she noticed that Reno was still scribbling on his piece of paper, with his head down. While he wrote, he bit his nails. His brows were tightly knitted, and he would pause now and then.

That 'why?' from Lin Sanjiu set him thinking, as he tried his best to formulate an answer. Rena did not close the door of the

apartment unit properly when she went in to search for her accessories. Lin Sanjiu and Reno could hear Rena's pittering footsteps as she moved around the room. Reno felt pressured every time he heard her footsteps. Finally, he finished what he was writing and checked the door before he showed his message to Lin Sanjiu.

His handwriting was as messy as before. He had crossed out a few words so there were black smudges everywhere. In spite of that, Lin Sanjiu managed to read the two sentences he wrote.

The first sentence: "She called me a 'coward'. What is that? We don't have that word in Red Nautilus."

The second sentence: "My sister doesn't have any starfish ear studs. I made that up! I think my sister is possessed by something!"

"What is going on?" Lin Sanjiu felt like she was going to explode. She wanted to ask more question but she suddenly heard footsteps drawing closer. Rena opened the door the very next second and peered out. Meanwhile, Reno had already crumpled up the piece of paper and stuffed it in his pocket.

"I searched but I can't find it anywhere," Rena didn't show any unusual signs at all. She pouted, "Since you brought that up, I think I didn't have that pair of ear stud when we arrived at Kisaragi Station... Maybe, I forgot it at Red Nautilus."

Reno did not reply, he shot a glance at Lin Sanjiu secretly.

"It's weird. Why would a guy like you notice a small ear stud?!" Rena suddenly glared at him, sounding a little suspicious at Reno, "Besides, I wear so many accessories... Even if someone were to point it out, shouldn't it be Lin Sanjiu?"

"She's right!" Mrs. Manas shouted abruptly from Lin Sanjiu's mind. Due to her excitement, the teacher had forgotten that she was not supposed to speak. Lin Sanjiu quickly scanned the faces of the two people around her with her higher consciousness. She

wanted to see if any of their expressions changed, but none of them moved. Since they planned not to move, their expression did not change. Lin Sanjiu couldn't figure out which of them was trying to conceal their reaction.

"Can you keep your opinions to yourself? We will speak when I enter the school again!" Lin Sanjiu shouted back in her head at Mrs. Manas.

Whenever Lin Sanjiu entered her [School of Higher Consciousness], she used her ability actively. As Mrs. Manas is part of her ability, others are unable to hear her during this process. On the other hand, when [School of Higher Consciousness] is not activated and Mrs. Manas speaks directly to Lin Sanjiu, the spirits would hear the teacher.

However, Mrs. Manas couldn't be blamed for this time around as Lin Sanjiu had the same sentiments. It is rare that a guy that doesn't wear many accessories would notice what his sister usually wears. Let alone Rena who had more than 100 accessories all over her body. It was quite unbelievable that he could even remember that his sister doesn't have any starfish ear studs and that he made up that statement.

Reno began to feel anxious, he gave a quick glance at Lin Sanjiu and defended himself, "Bullsh*t! I... I am your brother! I..."

But after he repeated "I" for a long time, he couldn't find any words to explain how he noticed that his sister didn't have a pair of starfish ear studs.

Rena harrumphed and leaned against the wall. She narrowed her eyes and stared at him.

"Honestly speaking, brother. Ever since we entered this building, I feel that there's something wrong with you. Even though you like playing pranks on others, you shouldn't make that sort of joke in the corridor!"

Reno looked up with a puzzled face, "A joke?"

"What's wrong? I tried to act as if you were possessed when you stuck your head out in the corridor and scared me! You forgot?" Rena frowned. The look of distrust on her face became more obvious.

"When did I..." Reno immediately replied. Before he finished his sentence, he changed his answer stiffly, "Oh. Oh. You mean that. I know..." Even though he said that, anyone could see from his pale face that he did not know what Rena was talking about.

The corridor fell into a complete silence. After some time, Reno suddenly stood up and broke the silence. "I'll go wash my hands," he said softly. Rena appeared slightly guarded as she shifted from the door. She watched him closely as he entered the apartment unit. Following that, Lin Sanjiu and Rena heard the sound of the bathroom door closing.

"This Reno doesn't know about the prank." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

After a few seconds, Rena woke Lin Sanjiu from her bewildered state using a soft voice. "Lin Sanjiu, I need you to help me," the girl bit her own lips as she planned. "I think my brother is acting really suspicious. I don't think he was playing a prank in the corridor. I think he is really possessed..."

Lin Sanjiu was stunned.

"I mean, that explains why he can't remember what happened. If he is possessed, I am not sure if my ability will work on him. So, can you help me?" Rena sighed softly.

"When he comes out from the bathroom, we can try to make him fall. Then, I will try to tie him up. If we meet any trouble, we can just adapt to the situation."

Chapter 210: Damn it! We finally Got One!

"Maybe, he doesn't have his guard up now. This is our best advantage." Light reflected off Rena 2's black round eyes. Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell if the girl was nervous or whether she found it fun. "You can wait at the side of the bathroom. When he comes out, just ram yourself at his ankles. I am sure he would fall after a few times. I will ambush him from the other side. Once he falls, I have my way of subduing him..."

After hesitating for a moment, Lin Sanjiu nodded and spelled, "Okay".

Lin Sanjiu didn't trust this Rena, but to her, Reno 2 was more suspicious than Reno 1. If they just subdued him and tied him up, it might be easier to find out the truth. After Reno 2 entered the bathroom, it had been silent. They didn't hear any sound of water. It was fairly reasonable since Reno would expose himself to black matter if he really washed his hands—if he was an imposter, he certainly wouldn't make such a rudimentary mistake. On the other hand, Lin Sanjiu was certainly undaunted when she tried to bathe her body.

If she didn't hear the occasional footsteps, Lin Sanjiu, who was hiding at a corner of the wall, would think that he had disappeared from the bathroom. After some time, they finally heard the door of the bathroom opening with a click.

Rena 2, who had pressed herself tightly to the wall, looked up and 'exchanged a look' with Lin Sanjiu. Since Lin Sanjiu was just a brain, Rena 2 was probably just trying to console herself. For their plan to be a success, Rena 2 had already removed all her accessories.

The door opened slightly and Reno 2 peeked out. He was not in a rush to get out. He looked from the left to right and back again with a single eye. After looking a few times, he finally opened the

door a little wider.

Lin Sanjiu could see everything clearly from where she was hiding as she was using her higher consciousness to 'see'. Just when she thought that Reno 2 would step out, and while she gathered her strength, she suddenly heard him calling out softly, "Rena?"

Rena 2 bit her lips but didn't make a sound. She shrunk closer to the corner of the wall.

"Rena? Lin Sanjiu?" Reno 2 was probably getting suspicious as it was too quiet outside the bathroom. He came out from the bathroom, but he didn't take a step forward. Instead, he stood at the door and yelled, "Where are you two?"

"If we don't make a sound, he will come out to check the situation eventually." Rena 2 and Lin Sanjiu had shared the same thought as they waited quietly at their hiding places. They didn't move as they were afraid that they would make a sound.

"Rena! Lin Sanjiu!" Reno 2 stuck his head out and took a careful step forward, "Gosh. Did they disappear again? What's wrong with this goddamn place?"

"Huh?" a thought flashed through Lin Sanjiu's mind. Even though she didn't really capture its significance, Lin Sanjiu trembled a little. But before she could think it through, she saw Rena gesturing vigorously to her with an anxious face.

Reno was walking swiftly to the end of the corridor, heading towards the living room. Lin Sanjiu could already see the tip of his shoes. Almost instinctively, before Lin Sanjiu could even react, she had already rushed out and rammed herself against Reno 2's ankle. As she had gathered her energy for some time, the impact of that collision far exceeded the other times. On top of that, Reno 2 was caught unaware, so he was knocked over and the momentum pushed him in Rena 2's direction.

"Bro, don't be scared! I'm just going to punch away that thing that is possessing you!" Rena 2 said sharply, due to her emotions. Next, she used both her hands, which were wrapped in something black, and grabbed Reno's bare arms which were not protected by his short sleeves. She pinned him to the ground.

Just then, Reno 2 suddenly let out a painful howl. His body shook violently like a fish out of water. Mrs. Manas, who had been observing everything from Lin Sanjiu's mindscape, could help blurting, "There's something wrong with him!" Lin Sanjiu rushed forward. She drew all her higher consciousness towards her front and lunged forward...

Rena 2 couldn't react in time and took that blow from Lin Sanjiu head on, her whole body flew backward. Before she could land on the ground, a few vague wisps of smoke rose from her face. She held her face and sprinted toward the main door without saying a word.

Before she could catch her breath, Lin Sanjiu quickly turned around, afraid that the circumstances would change if she let her guard down. She launched another attack at Rena 2. Lin Sanjiu hit "Rena's" singlet and the imposter let out a sharp shriek. Her upper body started to change indistinctly.

At that moment, a yellow paper whirred around the air. Lin Sanjiu turned behind and saw Reno. Enduring his shivers, he stood up. Unfortunately, 'Rena' had already sprinted to the main door. She seemed to know that the ability was very powerful so she crouched and hurried out of the door and slammed it behind her. In the end, that imposter slipped out of the range of Reno's ability.

"Don't... don't worry about me. I'm fine. Just chase that thing!" Reno roared. His teeth were still chattering. Lin Sanjiu stretched her body and slipped through the gap of the door. However, when she reached the corridor, bathed in yellow light, it was silent. She didn't see 'Rena' anywhere.

"What happened? How did you know she was an imposter?" Mrs. Manas was obviously startled by that rapid battle which didn't leave any time for any breather that she didn't even check Lin Sanjiu's subconsciousness. "And, why can this Reno activate that almanac ability too? If that is the case, both Renos can use that ability!"

In her higher consciousness form, Lin Sanjiu didn't need to breathe. However, at that moment, Lin Sanjiu looked as if she needed some time to 'catch her breath'. After that, she replied, "I nearly believed her... But, did you see how Reno reacted when she pinned him to the ground?"

Mrs. Manas checked a few images in Lin Sanjiu's mind and suddenly exclaimed, "Oh!"

Lin Sanjiu flew back to the living room and continued, "Yes. His face turned green and he started shivering. It was like he was feeling an intense cold... His sudden hypothermic like reaction, added to something I remembered. So, there can be no other reason."

Before Mrs. Manas could ask Lin Sanjiu what she remembered, Lin Sanjiu added, "If I'm right, 'Reno 1' upstairs isn't the real deal..." As she said this, Lin Sanjiu slipped back into the living room. There was a black figure on the sofa and the person was breathing.

"You're back? Did you catch that thing?" Reno sat up and asked urgently when he saw Lin Sanjiu. Before Lin Sanjiu could answer 'no', a suddenly dim light from the window flooded the room. She saw a small "X" on Reno's wrist.

Chapter 211: The Siblings Finally Reunite

Lin Sanjiu clearly remembered that Reno 2 (without the mark on his wrist) was on this floor. Even though she didn't constantly check his wrist, she was sure that before Reno entered the bathroom, his hands were clean, and he didn't have an "X" mark.

"But that explains things..." Mrs. Manas mumbled as if she had already figured out something. "Reno 2 is also fake. Even though we don't know how Reno 1 managed to come to this floor and replaced Reno 2, Reno 1 did step out from this bathroom. Thus, he could activate his almanac ability..."

"Is that really the case? The fake Rena had already expected Reno 1 to step out from this bathroom so she devised that plan? But, how did Reno 1 come to this floor..." There are too many points that don't make sense..." Lin Sanjiu kept feeling that there was something wrong. She had just managed to get some clues, yet the situation was immediately messed up by reality again. She thought silently for a very long time. In the end, she still couldn't come up with a reasonable explanation to convince herself.

The worst thing about this situation was that she couldn't use her [Consciousness Mimicry] to mimic Nüwa's thought process. Mrs. Manas had emphasized this to her many times, "Don't keep thinking about it. You might think that you theoretically have enough higher consciousness to activate the ability, but you don't have a body right now. If you used up all your higher consciousness mimicking Nüwa's thought process, you might really disappear from this world! Those two siblings aren't in any lethal danger right now. But, even if they're about to die, I'm not going to let you take that risk!"

Lin Sanjiu understood where Mrs. Manas was coming from. When she was killed, she could have become a duoluo zhong of Kisaragi Station if not for that little bit of higher consciousness which protected her consciousness and thoughts. When she was

alive, using up her higher consciousness just meant that she would enter a deep slumber. When she wakes up, she would recover her higher consciousness. However, now that she was dead, she could only recover and grow her higher consciousness because of the primary source from the 'nucleus' of her body. Mimicking Nüwa required an incredible amount of higher consciousness and if she accidentally used up her primary source in that 'nucleus'...

"Oh, you mentioned that you remembered something?" Mrs. Manas interrupted her thoughts, "How did you figure out who was real and who was the imposter?"

"Forget it..." Lin Sanjiu replied disappointedly, "I think I'm wrong. It's ok even if you don't know. Let's talk about it some other time. While she spoke with Mrs. Manas in her head, she slowly flew toward the Reno who was on the sofa. "Should I call this Reno with the mark on his wrist, Reno 1?" Lin Sanjiu thought hesitantly.

Since he had proven that he could use his almanac ability twice, this should be the real Reno. Since living humans can't hear Mrs. Manas, Lin Sanjiu didn't find it necessary to be cautious about that.

"Where is that spirit?" Reno asked. When Lin Sanjiu flew closer to Reno 1, she noticed that he was still shivering. He must have been badly affected by that attack. His teeth were still chattering when he asked, "Where is my sister?"

From his reaction, he just stayed in the apartment unit. He probably didn't notice that he had been shifted down a floor. Lin Sanjiu found the situation a little hard to explain.

"No, if Rena 2 was fake. Rena 1 (who has the dirty socks) is real." Considering this, she had already figured out how to identify the real Rena and Reno. Lin Sanjiu couldn't help sighing a breath of relief in her mind. Even though there were still many mysteries surrounding their situation, her priority was to find for the both of

them and make sure that they were fine. Next, they must leave this dangerous place at once.

"Let's look upstairs," she spelled out to the Reno 1. The teenager seemed a little less worried. Without any delay, he stood up, still shivering, "Lead the way, let's go."

Surprisingly, they found Rena 1 without much of a hassle.

Lin Sanjiu thought that the weird situation with multiple 15 floors would happen again and even prepared herself to search the entire building. However, when Reno 1 and Lin Sanjiu climbed up one floor and walked out of the stairway, they met Rena coming towards them unexpectedly. She was visibly alarmed and showed a guarded expression.

Since the girl's white socks had streaks of dirt, just as Lin Sanjiu remembered, she was probably Rena 1. After that incident with Reno's almanac ability, Rena 1 did not wear her accessories. At first, when Lin Sanjiu saw the accessoryless Rena 1, she almost thought that she was that imposter spirit that she had nearly destroyed.

Lin Sanjiu's current form (a brain partially covered by half a skull) was too eye-catching and Rena 1 immediately recognized her. When the girl saw Lin Sanjiu, she called her with a sobbing tone, "Lin Sanjiu! You a**hole! Can you stop running away without telling me!" While she said this, she put down her fists and wiped her eyes.

Meanwhile, Reno 1 walked out from the stairway. Rena 1 heard that noise and looked up and found herself facing him directly.

"Rena? Are you okay?" Reno 1 looked at her suspiciously. "Since that spirit was hurt quite badly, it shouldn't be able to recover quick enough to scare us again." Thinking about this point, he walked over to her hesitantly.

Somehow, Lin Sanjiu suddenly remembered a matter. Just

moments ago, the same Reno said that he found Rena 1 suspicious and that she wasn't like his sister. Even though that spirit she hit was almost killed, how could they confirm that there was only one spirit here?

Even without considering other possibilities, other than that spirit who posed as Rena, there was another one posing as Reno. If that thing wanted, it could change its appearance to look like Rena so that it could get closer to them. "Is it that hard to create the appearance of a few dirt streaks?"

But if Lin Sanjiu continued spiraling through her what-ifs, things would get too complicated. Lin Sanjiu looked at the Rena in front of her and decided that she was overthinking things. After all, Reno 1 might have made a mistake.

Both siblings seemed a little guarded. They only relaxed slightly after they exchanged a few words cautiously.

"This stupid place is too creepy," Rena 1 sounded a little aggrieved as she mumbled. "It is so spooky, but there is nothing around. I've already been scared a few times... Getting scared in Kisaragi Station World isn't something good."

"Why?" Lin Sanjiu spelled out midair, feeling puzzled.

"The more frightened you get, the easier it is for dark matter to invade your body," Rena 1 replied Lin Sanjiu. "We have anti-dark matter outfits and we can also see duoluo zhongs, nothing scared me much since we arrived in this world. However, I can feel that I am gradually being corrupted by dark matter..."

"Huh?" This was the first time Lin Sanjiu heard about this matter. That explained why she was corrupted by dark matter in just one day. After thinking for some time, she tried her best to shorten her question, "Protected. But your eyes?"

"You're stupid! We can't protect any part of our bodies not covered by clothes," Rena retorted, "It isn't some protective shield.

They are just generic items produced by The Munitions Factory."

From the kids' outfit, it must be summer in Red Nautilus. Since Rena was wearing a Tulle dress, she actually didn't have much protection. Even though Lin Sanjiu had many unanswered questions about this place, she felt that they should leave immediately now that they have found Rena. Lest, more problems arise.

However, Lin Sanjiu needed to do something before they left.

While the siblings chatted, Lin Sanjiu slipped away when they weren't noticing... Following the edges of the ceiling, she quickly flew one floor up, back to the floor where she fought with the spirit. She flew to the end of the corridor and floated to one of the corners. Then, she reached for something in that corner.

"Don't do this again. In your current form, you are using your higher consciousness every time you use your ability. If you use up all your higher consciousness, there is no telling what will happen to you..." Mrs. Manas naggy voice sounded in Lin Sanjiu's mind once again.

"I know. I did this because I had no choice. I can't be in two places at once," Lin Sanjiu replied. A white glow appeared at the corner of the corridor and it disappeared into her 'body' once she touched it. "Yes, yes. And I won't try to bathe myself again..."

While she said this, she looked at the Diary Card she just retrieved. Originally, Lin Sanjiu thought that all her cards were kept in her body, so she assumed that she couldn't use her Diary Card and her Nostradamus's Card. A few days ago, Lin Sanjiu didn't even think about them. When Lin Sanjiu sighed and commented today, "Too bad I don't have my Diary Card", Mrs. Manas immediately began to stammer. That was when Lin Sanjiu forced the truth from that teacher.

Lin Sanjiu's Diary Card and Nostradamus's Card are not converted from tangible things. They are abilities which branch

out from her [Planar World] so they are not bounded by her body. Mrs. Manas hid this from her because the effect of Lin Sanjiu's Diary Card lasts for 3 hours. She was afraid that Lin Sanjiu would use her abilities successively and without restraint and use up all her higher consciousness in the end.

"Hey, I am not stupid..." Lin Sanjiu grumbled while she read the first page of her card. Her Diary Card didn't have the ability to tell Lin Sanjiu who the imposter was, so it only recorded the situation using names like Reno 1 and Reno 2. This didn't help Lin Sanjiu much.

However, when she looked at the second page, her 'heart missed a beat'.

"Oh no!"

Chapter 212: According to the Diary Card's Hint...

The moment that the information recorded on Lin Sanjiu's Diary Card integrated into her consciousness, Mrs. Manas understood all its content as she was part of Lin Sanjiu's [School of Higher Consciousness]. Before Mrs. Manas could ask Lin Sanjiu what was wrong, she immediately changed her words and uttered, "Hurry! Go back!"

Even without Mrs. Manas urging her, Lin Sanjiu had already broken a window along the corridor and got out of the building. She flew upward as fast as she could but she was still too late. When she reached the "15th" floor upstairs, the siblings standing at the entrance of the stairways had disappeared.

"Damn it!" Lin Sanjiu cursed in her mind. She drifted hopelessly around the corridor a few rounds, but as expected, she couldn't find a single trace of the siblings.

"This is weird. I rushed up as soon as I read that Diary Card. That took less than a minute..." Lin Sanjiu was pissed, "How can that thing act so fast? It's as if it can predict my actions!"

Feeling furious and disgruntled, she couldn't help remembering what she read on her Diary Card.

The card didn't show much. Nothing unusual happened in the first two and a half hours recorded. However, a little more than 30 minutes after she and Reno 1 left the apartment unit, things started to change...

1:43 pm, Lin Sanjiu and Reno 1 opened the door of apartment 1520 and stepped into the corridor.

1:44 pm, Lin Sanjiu and Reno 1 took the bend around the corridor.

1:45 pm, the two people left the recording range of this Diary

Card.

1:56 pm, the door of apartment 1520 opened. Reno 2 peeked out and yelled, "Lin Sanjiu, where are you?"

1:57 pm, Reno 2 walked out of apartment 1520 and stepped into the corridor. He looked around.

2:01 pm, there was a 'ding' sound from the elevator.

2:03 pm, Reno 2 seemed to be talking to someone. Reno 2 was at the edge of the recording, so the conversation was not recorded.

2:07 pm, Reno 2's voice is now in the recording range, he said, "Wait for me, I will come back. Don't go anywhere else."

2:08 pm, Reno 2 appeared at the bend of the corridor and rushed into apartment 1520.

2:08 pm, a 'head' peeked out from the bend of the corridor. It was a brain with half a skull.

2:08 pm, the brain quickly hid again.

2:09 pm, Reno 2 ran out from apartment 1520. There are a few black security alarm devices in his hand. He ran past the bend of the corridor and said, "Let's go!"

2:10 pm, the sound of footsteps fades and exceeds the recording range.

2:23 pm, this Diary Card was retrieved.

Lin Sanjiu was the only one who was a 'brain-with-half-skull'. When Reno 2 was with the said 'brain with half skull', Lin Sanjiu was with Reno 1 and had just met Rena. From this recorded events, things became clear. The Reno who the fake Lin Sanjiu successfully tricked, or found worthwhile tricking, was definitely the real Reno. Lin Sanjiu realized that if Reno 2 is the genuine Reno, that would mean that Rena was currently unwary of the creature by her side that was non-human!

Perhaps, the thing that was pretending to be Lin Sanjiu was that

fake Rena.

Right now, both siblings were alone with one of those non-human things. The worst thing about this was that they both probably wouldn't suspect the other party next to them due to Lin Sanjiu's previous actions. With her around, Reno 1 (fake) told Rena that they fought off a spirit that looked like Rena. That was certainly convincing. Meanwhile, the real Reno, who had personally seen Lin Sanjiu saving his life, definitely trusted her fully and wouldn't think more about it. Thinking about this, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling anxious and guilty even though she knew that it wasn't her fault.

Lin Sanjiu could not figure out how the two things could act faster than her. It shouldn't take her more than two to three minutes to reach this current floor and she took less than ten seconds to react after reading her Diary card.

"How can they disappear so quickly?" Lin Sanjiu mumbled to herself, as she flew into the stairways trying to look for the siblings. Unfortunately, when she went up another floor, it was quiet, she didn't hear anyone. "Noise reverberates through stairways. I should hear a footstep even if they are two floors away. If they really left, I should be able to hear... ah!"

She chided herself for her stupidity and rushed to the elevator. "If I don't see them in the stairway, they must have taken the elevator!"

Without any hesitation, she flew out of a window and flew up to the 26th floor. When she saw the bright red '26' on the wall in the corridor, Lin Sanjiu smashed the glass window. Broken bits of glass fell to the floor like ice, creating a loud racket.

"Who's that?" a teenage girl called out suddenly; she sounded alarmed. A pair of eyes, hidden under the fringe of a pink wig, appeared at the end of the corridor. Rena spotted Lin Sanjiu and gave a sigh of relief before walking out. There were streaks of dirt

on her white socks.

"I'm really angry now!" Rena was so furious that her lips were turning white, and her eyes glowered. Then, she prattled like a machine gun, "Do you know there is some weird-ass sh*t going on here? Can you stop flying away like that?! You're an adult so why are you so insensible?! We came up here to look for you. Then, I lost my brother!"

"Hey, I came up here to save you." Lin Sanjiu literally felt an unspeakable bitterness. After the young girl berated her angrily, Lin Sanjiu really didn't care to waste any more time. She quickly thought about what she wanted to say and explained the situation in a few curt sentences.

This wasn't merely to defend her actions but Lin Sanjiu felt that she had to let Rena understand the entire situation. It was hard for her to find the real Rena, and as much as possible, Lin Sanjiu wanted to avoid the situation where things might get even more confusing.

After reading what Lin Sanjiu wrote, Rena quickly lowered her voice, "You mean that person beside me was an imposter?"

It wasn't easy for Lin Sanjiu to explain everything, even if she had her mouth. Furthermore, there were still many unanswered questions. However, she more or less managed to summarize the important points.

Finally, Rena nodded, "Okay, I got it. If that is the case, we must not lose sight of each other from now. Let's go look for my brother."

As soon as Rena said that, they heard a 'ding' from the elevator.

Chapter 213: After All These Twists and Turns, Who's Real?

The person who walked out from the elevator was Reno. He did not have any "X" mark on his hand.

From Lin Sanjiu's explanation, Rena learned how Lin Sanjiu distinguished the impostaers from her brother and herself. When Reno walked out from the elevator, Rena immediately looked at his wrist. Seeing that there wasn't any mark, she suddenly called out to him a little emotionally, "Reno!"

Reno reacted with a slight astonishment. In a moment of rashness, Rena wanted to rush out, but the moment she took her first step, Lin Sanjiu immediately stretched her body into a two finger-like form and 'pinched' the corner of Rena's dress.

"Even if he doesn't have a mark, we should be cautious. After all, he just appeared all of a sudden. Let's hear what he has to say." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

When Reno saw his sister, he seemed flabbergasted. He switched his gaze from the floating brain to his sister and back again for a few times. Finally, he spoke, stammering. As he wanted to say too many things at once, his sentences ended up sounding somewhat jumbled, "Re-Rena, are you really here? I mean, no. I mean, you're Rena, right? You don't know this, but something was pretending to be you and it attacked me! And... Lin Sanjiu, you're faster than me..."

For a second, Lin Sanjiu found the situation difficult to manage. Since both siblings were accompanied by an impostaer just moments before, it clearly created a problem. Both of them did not have the same experiences so they were on a different page.

When Reno 1, the impostaer, told Rena about the 'fighting with a spirit which resembled her', the real Reno was still looking for his

sister. Naturally, once he finally found his real sister, he definitely couldn't wait to share the incident with her again. Based on this logic, the Reno in front of them should be the real deal.

However, since the fake Reno took an early precaution and disappeared, he must have realized that he had let something slip by. If it knew it, removing a mark from his wrist wasn't something hard. "If he acted like this, was his first time seeing his sister after the event." Lin Sanjiu took a quick glimpse of Rena. Rena was frowning slightly and seemed to be thinking about the same thing.

In other words, when Lin Sanjiu found out about the imposter's identity, the fake Reno could have done the following: First, he came up to the 26th floor with Rena. Then, he disappeared from the 26th floor. He might have waited for Lin Sanjiu to meet with Rena before acting and appearing as the real Reno.

Lin Sanjiu couldn't even ask this Reno to use his ability to prove himself. For some reasons, the fake Reno had shown that he could use [Did you check your almanac before leaving your house today?].

According to this Reno, he was resting in the apartment unit after Lin Sanjiu rushed out to chase the spirit. After a while, 'Lin Sanjiu' returned and searched the entire building with him, trying to look for his sister. They saw the elevator going up before stopping at the 26th floor. While Reno took the elevator up, that fake 'Lin Sanjiu' flew out of the building to head upstairs and that was why he exclaimed that she was faster than him.

His explanation did match what was written in Lin Sanjiu's Diary Card. After Reno finished, Rena kept quiet for some time. She looked at Lin Sanjiu and at the teenage boy in front of her a few times and seemed uncertain if he was really her brother.

Lin Sanjiu felt clueless as she observed the teenage boy in front of her. "If the spirit successfully tricked the real Reno, why it released him? Won't those sly spirits be worried if the siblings left the

building immediately after they found each other?" The only way they could confirm that this Reno was real was if Rena attacked him now.

Just when Lin Sanjiu wanted to spell out her suggestion, Rena's hands suddenly glowed faintly. After that, the girl quietly and stealthily stretched out her hands. Reno was facing her with his back, so before he noticed, she attacked his back. Apparently, the teenage girl thought of the same method. This time, she probably used her [Superstition is banned after the founding of our country!].

Reno was visibly startled by that sudden punch. It revealed his obvious lacking fighting experience. Lin Sanjiu couldn't help sighing. As a posthuman, it was quite pathetic that he couldn't dodge that attack which was so close to him. Even if he trusted his sister, that wasn't even a valid excuse. But, thanks to that punch, both Lin Sanjiu and Rena could finally let down their guard.

He was the real Reno!

"Why did you hit me?" Reno questioned with furrowed brows.

"Hehe. Don't blame me. I needed to be sure." Rena's expression quickly grew lively. Laughing and grinning, she stuffed her hands back into her pockets and explained, "We have to be super cautious in this place!"

Reno seemed doubtful for a moment, but his hot-blooded nature got the better of him. He was visibly upset. Yet, he couldn't hold back his temper. After a few seconds, he finally hit his sister a few times. Rena found it unfair that she was hit an additional two times. And just like that, the two siblings squabbled in the corridor for some time. Lin Sanjiu couldn't help slightly admiring their simple-mindedness.

"Stop! I'm not going to fight with you now." Reno, who had been scratched quite a few times by his sister, looked a little furious. "Since we are both alright, let's leave this place quickly!"

This time, he was not going to bring about the issue of training in this place.

"Scared?" Rena giggled as she pressed the elevator button. Then, she pushed him, "Coward!"

"Huh?"

Lin Sanjiu slowly turned around in midair. She glared at Rena.

The words "We don't have that word in Red Nautilus" echoed in Lin Sanjiu's head.

Reno froze. He didn't say a word for two whole seconds.

On a closer look, her eyes had somehow become unusually large. The inner corners of her eyes were almost touching. Slowly, she looked at Lin Sanjiu and Reno with her jet-black eyes. "Uh-oh," she laughed. "I always forget this."

When Reno roared angrily and rushed toward her. 'Rena' let out a shrill laugh and quickly ran into the left corridor. Lin Sanjiu and Reno chased closely behind her. However, she disappeared once she slipped into an apartment with a half-opened door.

They flew to the door and Reno kicked the door open. Their actions scared the person inside the apartment unit. It was Rena.

Or more accurately, another Rena. Her eyes were normal. When she walked around the table toward them, Lin Sanjiu could see that her white socks were dirty. After staring at them blankly for a moment, Rena sighed and placed her hands down. She looked at them wide-eyed as if she didn't know what had just happened, "Brother? You found Lin Sanjiu?"

Chapter 214: Let's Take Turns Being Suspicious

No one knew if that Rena in the apartment was the same as the previous Rena in the corridor.

When Lin Sanjiu flew into the apartment unit following Reno, she wasn't even sure if the young man in front of her was the real Reno. She suppressed her immediate urge to use her [Consciousness Mimicry] and hovered in mid-air. Rena, who was standing in the living room, seemed to sense that something was wrong. The girl quickly stood straight, guarded.

"Rena, let me attack you once," Reno said softly after thinking for a moment, "This is the only way I can verify your identity."

Rena narrowed her eyes and looked at Reno. She took two steps back and raised her chin, "Okay... But, you have to let me hit you first."

At that moment, the atmosphere froze. The siblings watched each other for some time. Neither of them could bring themselves to agree with the other party's proposition first. Lin Sanjiu wasn't even confident who they were right now.

The only thing that was certain was that Reno and Rena had already been seriously corroded by black matter over these few bizarre days. If either of them were to receive an attack from one of the spirits, there was no telling if they would end up in the same fate as Lin Sanjiu. Furthermore, neither of them had any higher consciousness ability.

After contemplating for some time, Lin Sanjiu gritted her teeth and floated between the two teenagers and spelled out some words in the air: "They might have left. Why don't we just rest for a bit?"

Presently, Lin Sanjiu couldn't think of a better idea. For the time being, she couldn't bring herself to leave this building. She could

only calm the siblings and wait for things to unfold. Lin Sanjiu's suggestion helped ease the hostile tension between the siblings slightly.

In order to keep an eye on each other, the siblings cleared the space in the living room. They sat cross-legged in the center of the room and started to interrogate each other cautiously about their past shared experiences. Each time they spoke, they would start with, "Do you remember that year..." With each question, they would try to probe further and scrutinize each other.

Lin Sanjiu was in mid-air as she monitored the siblings with her full attention. Meanwhile, she ran through what had happened over the few days trying to make some deduction about the situation. Even though she had a vague feeling that she had caught something, she could not unravel the veil covering the truth. She knew that the siblings did not have the same experiences and information about the situation... Yet, she still couldn't make sense of many things...

No matter how hard she tried, she couldn't think of an explanation. She floated around the room unconsciously and suddenly realized that the room had turned silent. The siblings were staring at each other. Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell from their expressions if they were more relaxed or guarded than before.

"Brother, why do you remember only some events?" Rena asked quietly. Just when Reno was about to reply her, Rena seemed eager to skip over the matter and shook her head, "Forget it. Let's talk about it later. It is getting late, what should we do now?"

"We still have to do what we have to do," Reno replied straight-laced. He shot a sidelong glance at the sister in front of him and went to lie on a sofa. As the sofa was a two-piece set, the siblings each occupied a sofa. They sat opposite from each other so that they could monitor each other.

"Preserve our strength. Sleep," he said rather brusquely.

After saying that, he turned his back to Rena and didn't make any movements for some time. No one could tell if he was really sleeping. In Kisaragi Station World, the night was always longer than the day. The last rays of the sun disappeared from the sky by around four or five pm. Outside the windows, there was only pitch-black darkness.

Lin Sanjiu didn't know how much time had passed. She sensed a hint of change, it wasn't a sound. Perhaps, it was only a change in the flow of air that stirred Lin Sanjiu from her training. This time, Lin Sanjiu didn't dare to immerse herself fully in her training so she didn't make much progress. She did manage to fully develop her skull. At the moment, with her brain completed enveloped, she was a floating skull in midair.

Without moving, Lin Sanjiu used her higher consciousness to scan the entire room. She noticed that Reno had sat up in his sofa. In a controlled manner, without making a single sound, he looked at his motionless sister and then at the silent skull. He quietly stood up and went into the bathroom. Even though they had agreed that they should always be within sight, there was one thing they couldn't avoid. When either of them had to go to the bathroom, neither of them wanted to follow along.

Once Reno left, Rena immediately turned over. Apparently, she was just faking her sleep. Apart from the silence caused by their suspicion against each other, everything appeared normal on the surface. When Reno returned from the bathroom, he laid on his sofa again. Neither of them spoke. Once again, the night was enveloped by an almost death-like silence.

Nothing changed for a few hours as the night grew darker. It was so dark that it was even a little frightening.

Even when it was almost near daybreak, the siblings remained in their sofas. While they weren't noticing, Lin Sanjiu flew stealthily out of the window. She found that the few floors above and below them were totally dark, there didn't seem to be any sign of life. It

felt like there was only one pair of siblings in the entire building, the pair with her. She wanted to fly a little further but she was worried that something might happen. After some deliberation, she finally returned to the apartment unit a little anxiously.

Rena laid with her back facing out and did not make a single movement. However, when Lin Sanjiu flew past her, she couldn't resist reacting. In fact, Rena did not sleep the entire night. This wasn't anything surprising but at that moment she was giving Lin Sanjiu a look, trying to get her attention. As Rena's face was hidden under the shadow of the sofa, it was difficult to see her face. If it weren't because Lin Sanjiu vision from her higher consciousness was far better than her eyesight, she would have missed that girl's expression.

"What is she doing?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself as she drifted over, feeling puzzled.

Seeing that she had gotten Lin Sanjiu's attention, Rena's expression relaxed, though her body was still very tense. Rena didn't dare to really move. She gestured to Lin Sanjiu with her mouth to look behind her.

Lin Sanjiu responded and 'looked' over. The sight which greeted her shocked her so much that she nearly fell from midair. As she was occupied with her thoughts when she returned to the living room, she only took a fleeting glance at the siblings lying on their sofas so she didn't notice. She saw that Rena was lying on her sofa with her back facing out, whereas Reno was lying down while facing his sister...

He was indeed facing his sister, looking at her. However, under his face, Lin Sanjiu could clearly see his backbone. She had a clear view that it was his back. That is to say, Reno had twisted his head 180°. He was staring at Rena with narrowed eyes while maintaining the act of breathing.

While Lin Sanjiu shuddered and wondered why Rena had not

acted, she saw the girl waving to her with a very subtle motion. Rena still looked frightened but her face showed her determination.

Lin Sanjiu was stunned for a second but quickly reacted. Rena sat up slowly, acting like she was going to the bathroom. "Reno" immediately turned his head back when Rena turned over, reverting to a normal person's position.

Rena beckoned for Lin Sanjiu while standing outside the bathroom. Lin Sanjiu quickly floated to the other end of the room, acting as if she was trying to find a place to rest. As Lin Sanjiu was translucent, it wasn't hard to hide her presence in the dark. Seeing that "Reno" did not notice her actions, Lin Sanjiu and Rena slipped into the bathroom and closed the door.

"If we don't inadvertently alert him," Rena spoke so softly that she almost couldn't hear herself, "it might be alright if we could destroy him. However, if we can't, we would just find ourselves back at square one. Even if we destroy him, I still won't know where my brother is... Why don't we keep him here and secretly observe him? Perhaps, we could find clues to my brother's whereabouts."

The girl seemed to have thought through the matter multiple times. Even though she stuttered a little because she was scared, she sounded very convicted. Even though Lin Sanjiu doubted that the 'thing' would bring them to Reno, she agreed with Rena after thinking for a bit.

"I'll go out first. You can go back to the living room a little later. I don't want him to find out that we had been together." After saying that, Rena waited for a few seconds before opening the door. Nothing had changed in the living room. "Reno" was still lying motionlessly on his sofa.

Chapter 215: Falling off the 26th floor

"I told him to go to the kitchen to make something to eat," Rena said. There were a few pimples on Rena's usually smooth, youthful skin due to the stress accumulated over the last few days. Rena touched her own cheeks, rather nervously, as she uttered urgently, "We need to act quickly."

When Lin Sanjiu saw Reno walking into the kitchen, she sighed silently. It had been a few days since they noticed Reno's abnormality. Over the last days, Lin Sanjiu and Rena had to act relaxed despite the tension. They tried their best to pretend nothing had happened while they constantly observed "Reno". Even though Reno did not exhibit any odd behavior after that, it was obvious that a fight was inevitable. Consequently, Lin Sanjiu trained very hard over the few days. She had already 'developed' her thoracic vertebrae and about four rib bones. Her collarbone was also nearly reaching the scapula. If she had a bit more time, she was sure her shoulders would start appearing. Her progress was so fast that even Mrs. Manas was surprised.

Unfortunately, the situation did not play out to their favor and Lin Sanjiu did not have enough time to be fully prepared.

"Say something," Rena looked at Lin Sanjiu a little anxiously, "What about tonight?"

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help sighing—the skull's mouth opened slightly before closing again. Lin Sanjiu was still unable to speak. Afterall, it was impossible for a skull to make a sound. However, Lin Sanjiu could now remove and write words on one of her ribs. In any case, compared to a few days ago, it was more efficient and secretive.

There wasn't anything wrong with Rena's suggestion. After dragging this out for quite a few days, it was certainly time for them to end this speedily. However, Lin Sanjiu still couldn't figure

things out. With the nagging sense of worry, Lin Sanjiu couldn't make a decision. Under these circumstances, was there still something important she didn't know?

Seeing that the skull in front of her wasn't responding, Rena couldn't help feeling extremely antsy. She wanted to urge Lin Sanjiu again but Reno walked out of the kitchen just then. He was holding two dishes and his expression was visibly more relaxed than two days ago. That relieved expression only appeared after Rena handed him two boxes of instant food. It was that reaction that baffled Lin Sanjiu.

Rena had been carrying the siblings' food supply all along ever since they left Red Nautilus. Since she was able to bring out the food provisions from Red Nautilus, her identity was somewhat proven. If the Reno with them was real, it was logical that he would feel relieved. But if the Reno with them wasn't the real deal, why would he show that expression? Was it even possible that the duoluozhong was so meticulous that he covered every single tiny detail?

"Come, let's eat." Reno placed the dishes on the table with a clink. The food in the plates looked far from appealing. The food seemed to be some greenish-yellow mixture mixed with pieces of white stuff. The mixture had been compressed into a brick-like shape which had been cut into small pieces. The surface of each piece was uneven and there seemed to be some dregs. At first glance, they looked like jellified vomit.

Without changing her expression, Rena sat at the table.

"No matter how many times I see this, it looks really disgusting," Rena somehow found a fork and stuck it into one of the pieces. "It is actually quite expensive."

"We have no choice. Who knows if we can find anything edible out there," Reno took a bite without hesitation. "It tastes bland, but it isn't that terrible..."

"Yeah, who knows if there is still any food in this world that is not contaminated by black matter," Rena cut her food into little bits but she didn't put anything into her mouth. Reno did not notice that his sister was delaying her time, he continued eating and asked, "Probably not... That's right, Lin Sanjiu why have you been running around these two days—"

Before Reno finished his sentence, without swallowing the food in his mouth, the situation in front of him changed instantly. Rena flipped the table and kicked it. The plates, along with all the cutlery, flew toward Reno. Before Reno could make a move, Rena rushed forward. She held a fly whisk, which appeared from nowhere, in her hand and slapped Reno's face with it. Slap. Reno fell off his chair. His limbs went stiff and he suddenly seemed immobilized.

This happened in a split second. The moment Reno fell to the ground, Lin Sanjiu suddenly understood everything, almost as if struck by lightning. She lunged forward and extended one of her ribs so that it stopped the fly whisk which was about to hit Reno. Next, she made herself into a flat sheet, squeezing herself between the siblings.

"Why are you protecting him?" Rena eyes glowed with anger as she missed her well-aimed attack, "Are you also a duoluo zhong?"

It was apparent that the fly whisk was a powerful Special Item. After Rena said that, Reno was still unable to move. Lin Sanjiu knew that the next few minutes were crucial. She started to write her reply in a hurry.

Unfortunately, she couldn't write as fast as she could speak. When she just wrote the word 'he', Rena had already lost patience. The girl waved her flywhisk once again.

Lin Sanjiu had just written 'is', when she was interrupted. She gathered a large amount of her higher consciousness and rushed over, taking on the attack directly. She didn't know what sort of

item that flywhisk was but that attack was very powerful. Taking just one hit, Lin Sanjiu could feel a small of her higher consciousness on the verge of dissipating. This scared her so much that she quickly withdrew and condensed them together.

Rena seemed even more shocked. She stared at Lin Sanjiu, with her mouth wide open and then at her fly whisk. Her face turned pale.

Lin Sanjiu anxious and agitated. While Rena was in shock, Lin Sanjiu quickly wrote 'is your'—. However, almost as if she didn't see those words, Rena pulled back her fly whisk, posing herself for another attack. Lin Sanjiu was sure she couldn't block that attack this time. Rena almost ran past Lin Sanjiu.

At that moment, Lin Sanjiu compressed herself into the size of a soccer ball. Using the momentum stirred up by Rena, Lin Sanjiu shot forward hitting Reno's shoulder. Reno, who was still on the ground, slid away just in time, just before Rena's attack hit him.

This time, Rena finally abated. She stared at Lin Sanjiu doubtfully without saying a word. She stopped as she saw the word 'brother'.

"He is my brother?" The teenage girl laughed softly, "Are you crazy? My brother is a human. How can he turn his head 180°? If he did that, he'd be dead!"

Lin Sanjiu didn't have time to explain further. She only wrote a curt reply, "It's true." Ignoring how confused Rena was, Lin Sanjiu turned and flew to Reno. She stretched her body into a rope-like shape and tied his ankles. After that, she quickly glided to the balcony.

As the effect of the fly whisk attack was still active, Reno could only watch helplessly as Lin Sanjiu dragged him to the edge of the balcony. With his eyes wide-open, Lin Sanjiu didn't know what he was thinking. Without time to consider his feelings, she smashed the low wall of the balcony. With that, she threw Reno's body

down, along with multiple pieces of concrete, off the 26th floor.

"What are you doing?" Rena couldn't help crying out in alarm. Just when she was considering if that person was her brother, Lin Sanjiu had thrown him out of the building. Rena's heart missed a beat as she ran to the edge of the balcony as fast as she could. "The flywhisk only has ten seconds—"

Before she could finish her sentence, she felt a force behind her back. She screamed before she found herself falling off the building.

"So, Lin Sanjiu was the duoluo zhong —"

As a sense of weightlessness wrapped itself around that thought, Rena felt her brain freeze. She couldn't think of anything else. But, in the next second, Rena saw a skull jumping off the building. It appeared larger and larger in front of her.

"Grab me! We need to escape!" The top of the skull had been stretched and a few words appeared. Meanwhile, the other half of Lin Sanjiu's 'body' had transformed into a rope which she wrapped around Rena's waist. Rena saw the other end of the rope speeding past her as it chased up to Reno. It quickly caught Reno by the waist. With that, Lin Sanjiu reduced the speed at which the siblings were falling.

"Escape? Who is chasing after us?" Rena was puzzled as she thought to herself. Her gaze shifted from Lin Sanjiu to the residential building. She saw two faces peering from the edge of the balcony they had fallen from. Those two expressionless faces were more than familiar to her, it was her face and Reno's.

Rena was just about to shout "Those duoluo zhongs!" when Reno's voice suddenly rang out, "We have to change directions!"

Chapter 216: Escape

Even though Lin Sanjiu should be able to fly in her higher consciousness state, that was under the premise that she was not carrying any load. While she carried two people weighing up to 180 pounds, she couldn't even fly being dragged down by their weight, much less change directions. It took all her energy just to keep the kids from falling too fast.

Hearing Reno's sudden shout, her heart missed a beat as she swung her eyes upward. She instantly felt a bout of bitterness.

Have you ever seen an ice-cream cone which had been under the summer sun for too long?

The 30-stories residential building that they were in had somehow become oddly flexible. It curved down on them like a banana. It had created a platform, composed of a floor of apartments, as if ready to 'catch' them when they landed.

The apartments which made up the platform were stretched and flattened. Under the dazzling glass windows, the multiple dead bodies belonging to the former residents were also flattened. "Pop!" An eyeball burst under the pressure of the windows and became a squishy mess.

The building which was supposed to be made of reinforced concrete was now displaying unbelievable flexibility and movement. Cracks appeared on the bricks which formed the walls of the building as loud creaks filled the air. They sounded like the cackles of a gigantic creature.

"Ahhh! It's coming. It's coming!" Rena suddenly shrieked while she struggled in midair. Her excessive movements made it even harder for Lin Sanjiu to maintain their falling speed. Unfortunately, Lin Sanjiu could not say a word. Lin Sanjiu tried her best to endure it for some time but finally, she faltered like an injured bird trying its best to flap its wings. The siblings fell

unimpeded for a segment. Reno was so scared that she shouted once again. "Fly further away!"

There was an apartment, from whichever floor, very close to Rena. She could see the open balcony door right in front of her. It was no surprise that Rena was scared because Lin Sanjiu saw the largest family portrait she had ever seen in her life, right behind the open door.

It was a standard family photo of three. Lin Sanjiu could understand how it could come off the wall, move to the balcony and expand to the point that it was higher than the apartment's ceiling. There was a matted reflection on the photo and one of its corners was skewed. The extended portion of the photo was flat and thin. This weird shape caused the faces of the people in the photo to become deformed. It was as if the only feature recognizable were their black eyes. As Lin Sanjiu and the siblings fell closer, the people in the photo seemed to show their gleeful faces.

"Hell, I want to fly further too!" Lin Sanjiu wanted to curse.

If they continued falling like that, Rena wouldn't be the only one who would be snatched away by that family portrait, Reno and herself would also fall straight into that platform of apartments below. In the past, Lin Sanjiu had never really understood the phrase 'sparing no effort'. However, when she saw a row of windows suddenly opening beside her without any warning, she finally understood what that meant. If she was still in her corporeal body, she was sure that forcing herself to use that much strength would have caused her eyeballs to burst like those corpses.

She used all her strength but she still couldn't stop the siblings and herself from falling. Meanwhile, the family portrait was at the railing of a balcony. One of its corners was almost touching Rena's leg. The middle-aged woman in the portrait flashed a wide smile. The three people in the photos were stretched in an even more

twisted manner. Rena screamed as one of the pink shoes was caught by them. Shocked, Rena kicked off her shoe such that it hit the family portrait right in the middle. A suddenly low groan rang out. The family portrait suddenly lost its vigor as if it had been struck by an attack.

"I nearly forgot that these shoes are Special Items." Rena gasped as the air rushed past her while she was falling. Then, she shouted, "Quick! Let go before it recovers!"

Lin Sanjiu felt a moment of relief and when she heard Rena, she managed to forcefully change their direction. She created some distance between them and the residential building. Noticing that they were further, the building bent further, while a rapid succession of cracking sounds filled the air. The roof of the building lowered further and almost created a 'C' in midair.

All this happened in less than ten seconds. Meanwhile, Reno started regaining his ability to move. He lowered his head and saw the platform of apartments right underneath him. In less than three seconds, he was going to fall into one of the windows. His face immediately turned pale.

"Brother, don't you have those bombs? Quick! Use it!" Reno heard his sister calling out from above him. With her quick reminder, the teenager quickly removed a chain of small round balls around his belt. Just when Lin Sanjiu was wondering what they were talking about, Reno wrung the chain of balls a few times and threw them all out.

They were greeted by a tsunami of explosion sounds and a strong gust of wind which almost seemed to engulf everything. It was as if someone compressed countless claps of thunder together, or as if something had pierced through the fabric of reality. In any case, if Lin Sanjiu had ears, she would be made deaf. Lin Sanjiu had never encountered any explosion of this degree.

The blast wave flung the three of them almost a kilometer away

from the explosion. Seeing that they were close to the ground, Lin Sanjiu relaxed and released her grip on the siblings. They fell heavily to the ground. The fireball behind them had swallowed almost everything. The siblings were battered by shards of glass, concrete, and steel. Thankfully, though they were covered in wounds, they had left that strange building.

Rena wiped the dust and blood off her face and looked at her brother before shouting at him, "Are you stupid? Why did you throw so many bombs?"

"What did you say?" Reno replied in the same volume. He dug his ears and answered, "I can't hear you!"

Lin Sanjiu returned to her usual form. When she looked at herself, she couldn't help feeling upset. With such an exertion, she had used up a large amount of her higher consciousness. Not only did her thoracic vertebrae and rib bones disappear, even the skull covering her brain was almost gone. Hearing the siblings squabbling despite becoming near deaf, she wrote 'Let's go!' and flew away first.

It was only then that the siblings reacted and followed her in a hurry. When the three of them walked past the other buildings in the residential area, the main doors of those buildings suddenly opened. From the looks of it, the buildings in this residential area had become weird 'demonic buildings'.

Haunted by the traumatic experience, the siblings gasped for air as they ran for almost over ten minutes before they finally left the residential area far behind them. They could already see the train tracks leading toward the train station. Reno suddenly stopped and gripped his sister's arm.

"What?" Rena shouted. Lin Sanjiu turned around.

"Look..." Reno said while he pointed in the direction that they came from. That residential building which was right in the middle of the blast was still standing. After the smoke and fire

cleared, it returned to its normal position with the same cracking sounds without showing much damage other than a few dark burnt marks. It appeared to be normal once again.

Chapter 217: Revelation Chapter 1

"So... what actually happened?" Rena plopped down on the stairs leading to the train station while she asked that question breathlessly. The siblings had never been in such a sorry state. When Lin Sanjiu first saw them on the train, they were high-spirited and seemed to not give a damn about their surroundings. Their previous attitudes had been totally destroyed by the dirt, bloodstains, and wounds which they were now covered in. Their clothes were in tatters and they looked like a pair of homeless children on the street. One of them had lost a shoe, so she walked around with one gray, dirty foot. The other teenager's hair was in a poofy mess after the explosion. As he was too close to the blast, his face was covered in thick black soot that even blurred his features.

After resting for more than an hour, the siblings, with their sore bodies, gradually regained some of their hearing.

"Hey, how could he be my brother?" Rena spat out some dirt from her mouth. Lin Sanjiu could see the suspicion on the girl's face despite the dirt and blood on her face. As Rena had just regained her hearing, she still found it hard to hear, so she spoke loudly, "If a normal person rotates his head 180°, wouldn't he die?"

Reno shot a glance at his sister. He was innocent and felt that he was treated unjustly, "I have been hearing you babbling about 180° this and that. What the heck are you talking about? When did I ever do that? Why don't you show me how it is done?"

"It's true! If you don't believe me, you can ask Lin Sanjiu—"

Lin Sanjiu was still feeling the heartache of losing that large amount of higher consciousness she had worked so hard to recover. When she heard her name, she looked at them and found the two teenagers staring straight at her, waiting for her answer. She couldn't help feeling a little guilty.

Even though she had successfully saved the siblings, she knew

that it was largely due to luck. Though she had more or less understood what really happened, there were still many points she couldn't explain. The teenagers weren't stupid. Perhaps, once they saw the situation from her deduction, they might be able to put the pieces together and somewhat get to the bottom of the situation.

Lin Sanjiu thought for a moment and organized her thoughts. Then, she started writing on her 'skull' The siblings knew that she couldn't explain the entire situation in a few words so they were very patient. While they cleaned their own wounds, they looked at Lin Sanjiu ever now and then, ensuring that they did not miss a single word.

"That thing which could turn its head 180° was definitely not any living person. We did, in fact, see the spirit posing as Reno." Though Lin Sanjiu had used up a lot of her higher consciousness, her training over these few days allowed her to use her higher consciousness a lot more effectively. It was almost as if it was a part of her body, so she could now write her words in the time of a flashing thought.

"Huh, but I monitored him constantly." Rena pointed to her brother. The latter listened to his sister with a blank face and an opened mouth. "I didn't see him being swapped! Besides, without the cooperation of the real person, how could the spirits swap their identities so easily?" Rena argued.

"Have you forgotten that the building itself was problematic?" Lin Sanjiu replied in words. She immediately felt that it was difficult to explain some parts of the situation. She decided to start from the beginning. There were still many points which didn't make sense to her, and this was an opportunity for the siblings to help make sense of things.

"I think the key to this mystery lies in the building itself. For some reasons, the residential buildings in this area have all become spirits. Normally, they can't move. But when we entered that particular building, we immediately became its prey." After

witnessing how the building could change its structure, it wasn't hard for the siblings to imagine, so they nodded in agreement.

"I don't know how these demonic buildings usually 'capture' their prey," Lin Sanjiu paused for a bit, deliberating over her words, "But, you two are definitely not easy pickings."

Over the few days, Lin Sanjiu came to know about some of the rules in this Kisaragi Train Station World.

The duoluozhongs there were different. They couldn't kill anyone directly. These duoluozhongs were humans who had totally assimilated with black matter. For some reasons, they evolved into all sorts of different spirits and could only attack humans who had been corroded by black matter. It isn't all that hard to meet this condition. Any outsiders would slowly and eventually be corrupted by black matter after they breathe the air and drink the water here. The spirits can also hasten the process.

However, Reno and Rena were different. When the siblings entered the buildings, only their eyes were corrupted by black matter. However, due to the quality of their Special Items, they were protected from head to toe. They even had mini filters in their noses for breathing. It was highly unlikely that the duoluozhongs could get the siblings like the same way they killed Lin Sanjiu.

Meanwhile, the demonic buildings were different from other duoluozhongs because they could not move. Since they could not move, any prey that entered their doors was extremely valuable. Therefore, the building used a roundabout way to keep them in.

Though the siblings were wearing protective gears, they weren't fully protected. The 'residential building' probably figured that out and acted accordingly. The siblings' weakness was that their exposed skin was still susceptible to black matter. To the building, Lin Sanjiu was merely a drop of wax on its plate. It couldn't consume her but it couldn't get rid of her either. She was slightly

bothersome but she had never been a target.

"Are you saying that they tried to corrupt us with black matter by getting a spirit to pose as us?" Rena seemed to be getting the picture, but she was still confused.

"I know what she means. You're stupid." Reno didn't miss the chance to provoke his sister, "One of the spirits pretended to be you, and the other was pretending to be me. They were hiding in two different places close to us because it is easier to get us that way!"

Lin Sanjiu moved her body up and down to show that she agreed. Furthermore, Rena had brought up a point to her: when a person receives a fright in Kisaragi Station World, he or she becomes very susceptible to black matter. The series of strange occurrences in the building successfully scared the siblings and made them uneasy over the few days. Rena even mentioned that she suspected that she had already been badly corrupted by black matter.

"I guess those things that impersonated you were people who died in the building," Lin Sanjiu continued. She didn't have any evidence to support this, so it was just guesswork, "Just like the remoras on a large fish, they depend on the building to 'survive'."

Whether they were once posthumans and whether they could impersonate the siblings because of their abilities... Those were questions that could never be answered unless they returned to the building.

"I understand that part," Rena said while she touched a deep cut on her face. Surprisingly, she only drew a deep breath as she focused her full attention on the mystery at hand, "But, for a second, he was human, then he was a duoluozhong again. I don't really get it."

The constant changes were also too complicated for Lin Sanjiu, so she wasn't very sure herself. After pondering for some time, she wrote, "I think the building tricked us. It works like toy blocks."

"Toy blocks?" the two children stared Lin Sanjiu's words, finding it somewhat hard to process. "What do you mean?"

If Lin Sanjiu had to write out the whole explanation, she knew it would be too much to write and too confusing. She might even need to continue writing to the next day. Besides, she needed the two teenagers to fill in the gaps in her deduction. With this in consideration, Lin Sanjiu wrote, "Why don't you two describe what you experienced after we entered the building?"

The two teenagers exchanged glances and began giving their own accounts of what happened. Just as Lin Sanjiu expected, even from the start their accounts differed in a curious manner.

"After my brother played a prank on us, we walked along the corridor trying to find an apartment unit to rest in..." Rena had just started when Reno interrupted, "Wait! I told you I didn't prank you! It was not me!"

"Oh yeah, you totally forgot what you did? And, you never said that before—"

Seeing that the situation was going out of control soon, Lin Sanjiu immediately wrote, "Ignore that, just continue". The kids instantly became quiet.

"It was very strange. All the other apartment units were old and shabby, but the one that my brother found was very beautiful... so we decided to stay there. We heard some sounds in the middle of the night. At that point, Lin Sanjiu, you went to check out that sound, right? But, you didn't return. I woke my brother up and got him to look for you. I didn't expect you guys to be away for so many hours. I went out to look for you guys but I couldn't find you. In the end, I waited in the room by myself..." When Rena said this, she suddenly shuddered as if she had returned to that creepy night. "Luckily, you came back."

While Rena was waiting for her brother and Lin Sanjiu to return, Lin Sanjiu had returned to an empty apartment. She searched the

entire building all the way to the lobby and met the siblings on the 15th floor. After Lin Sanjiu wrote this, Rena's eyes grew wide as this was the first time she came to know of this.

Reno wanted to speak for himself badly but he winced as he held back his words. When Lin Sanjiu signaled for him to speak, he exhaled and described his version of events like a machine gun, "If that is the case, it was problematic from the beginning! I didn't play any pranks on you. I went straight to that beautiful apartment unit and Rena found that place... Yes, I didn't see Lin Sanjiu around. Rena told me that you went to check out the surroundings and would return soon."

Telling his part of the story to this point, Reno realized that the person beside him was definitely not a living person. His face turned slightly pale, "As you didn't return, we went out to find you. The elevator came up and it opened. Then, we saw you."

Unexpectedly, Lin Sanjiu's narrative matched Reno's at that juncture. Lin Sanjiu felt that she was getting a clearer picture, so she quickly mentioned about how she had heard a flushing sound and how Reno saw her corpse. She told them how she flew up to the floor above and found Rena. The teenagers were stunned as she recounted her experience.

"Ah, so the timeline goes like this," Reno said as he gestured the entire situation, "We entered two different apartment units at the same time. After Lin Sanjiu left, she returned to an empty apartment. Meanwhile, the fake Rena told me to look for you. I met you when you came out of the elevator. Then, you stayed with us in the apartment I was in. This occurred while fake Reno went out and left Rena alone to find for us. She didn't manage to find us. That was until Lin Sanjiu flew upward and met the real Rena."

Even though the situation was still extremely messy, they managed to figure out this part.

"No wonder..." Rena's face also looked pale, "While I was walking

along the corridor, I felt that something was a little off. I even examined the angle of the wall. I just couldn't wrap my head around how a person can twist his head in that manner... Furthermore, my brother doesn't wear a Special Item in front of his chest. So, from that point, it wasn't my brother."

"But how did the building do that?" Reno asked, "When Rena was looking for us, how did she miss the floor we were on?"

"She didn't miss it... When we were escaping, we witnessed how it acts. Or at least, some part of it," Lin Sanjiu continued. "It is actually quite simple. Every apartment and every corridor in the building is like a single toy block. The building can move each block in whatever manner it wishes."

"For example, when we were pranked. Reno walked around a bend and entered a stretch of corridor alone. At that time, the corridor was moved away and it was replaced by another corridor which the fake Reno. The duoluo zhong probably died with his neck twisted in that manner. He might not have had enough time to change it, so he slipped up. Hence, he tried to pass it off as a prank so that he had an excuse. On top of that, the building used the 'toy block swapping' method so many times, because it works. On the other hand, we were totally confused by the situation."

Reno remembered that when he walked into the corridor, he didn't notice anything out of place. He couldn't help dropping his jaw.

Lin Sanjiu had solved the first part of the mystery which bothered her. She was more confident with her deduction so she urged the siblings to continue. The two siblings' narrative weaved around each other like casually drawn scribbles. Sometimes, they crossed each other and at other moments they were just very different. It resolved many questions that Lin Sanjiu had.

When they were almost done recounting what had happened, Lin Sanjiu stopped and thought for some time. She sighed. Even

though this sounded a little weird, that building could be considered the craftiest opponent ever since she came to this world. At every crucial point, the building planned everything ahead of them. It created a very effective trap, using the duoluozhongs to create a smokescreen... If Lin Sanjiu had not been a bystander observing the situation, the siblings would have fallen prey to its tactics. They might have a fight to death with each other.

"Now, we can organize the points when the swaps occur," Lin Sanjiu wrote and felt relieved.

Chapter 218: Revelation Chapter 2

The siblings continued from where they stopped and told Lin Sanjiu about their experiences. With everyone' narratives, they were getting closer to the truth.

"An important turning point in the situation was when I flew upstairs and found Rena." Lin Sanjiu found that it was too slow for her to write on her own skull and instead chose to write on the dusty marble floor of the train station. Before that, the building did not even care to recognize my existence. This was why it was unprepared when I found that there were two pairs of siblings in the building whose identities I couldn't ascertain."

"If you think about it, if I weren't around, you might not even have realized that the person beside each of you was a spirit. You probably didn't know that there was another you in the building... right?" Seeing Reno and Rena nodding, Lin Sanjiu continue writing, "For the building, the best scenario is that neither of you ever finds out that the person beside you is an impersonator. The rooms can move around like toy blocks, so both of you would never meet each other. If you were killed by the duoluo zhong beside you without knowing anything, that would be simple and straightforward."

However, for better or worse, the siblings had Lin Sanjiu with them.

After a few encounters with those duoluo zhongs, Lin Sanjiu could more or less tell what her higher consciousness form meant to them. She was like a floating piece of cotton wadding. A normal person wouldn't chase after it just to smack it to the ground. No matter what the duoluo zhongs were planning, they certainly didn't calculate her existence into their plans.

When that cotton wadding has self-awareness and some abilities, it becomes an unexpected bug in a well-programmed process.

When Lin Sanjiu found out about the "fake siblings" plan, the building finally realized its mistake.

"I would say that this building is crafty because it actually guessed correctly what I wanted to do next, and quickly made preparations." When those words appeared, the siblings, who had been matching their experiences with Lin Sanjiu, understood what she meant immediately.

"At this point, the building planned for me and Rena to meet," Reno added with conviction.

When Lin Sanjiu brought Rena down one floor to look at the additional pair of siblings, the building moved away that apartment unit. When Lin Sanjiu and Rena were at a loss, Reno appeared. It was the real Reno. Ever since that 'prank', this was the first time the siblings reunited.

"Damn, it's smart..." Reno commented as he clicked his tongue, "Regardless, when someone finds out that there is an imposter around, his or her first thought would be to verify if that person is who they truly claim to be. And when that happens, the building would replace the imposter with the real person."

Lin Sanjiu agreed somewhat helplessly with a slight nod. The plan to verify their identities by their abilities was logically sound. However, once the building was prepared for this, they were playing into its trap."

"The building used the result of our verification to fool us... After both of you had displayed your own abilities to prove your identities, Reno and I went to another apartment unit across the corridor from where Rena was. At that time, I did not know that the apartment units were being moved around. I only know that Reno was on my right and Rena was on my left and that both of you were real. That was until the fake Reno walked out to inform me that he suspected that the real Rena wasn't his sister. I was stunned then."

"Of all things, his analysis of Rena's abilities did make sense..." Lin Sanjiu sighed, feeling a little scared when she remembered that situation. "The duoluozhongs who were impersonating you guys actually knew everything that had happened even though they were not around... From this, we can infer that the building had been constantly monitoring our every movement since the beginning."

The siblings exchanged glances and clearly showed the lingering fears from their experience.

After Lin Sanjiu was convinced by the fake Reno, she went to look for the 'real Rena'. She found the real Reno playing cards with the fake Rena on another floor. One could imagine her shock when she made that discovery.

When the real Reno sensed that something was wrong with the 'sister' beside him, fake Rena started to cajole Lin Sanjiu into believing her. Perhaps, the duoluozhong was unable to launch a direct attack, so she wanted Lin Sanjiu to work together with her to attack Reno. As Lin Sanjiu was convinced that the real Reno in front of her was an imposter, she wasted no time agreeing to that course of action.

"Yes, I took a hit from you. I was already shocked by that sudden attack in the dark. Then, that duoluozhong pressed a creepy, cold item on me. I am sure that was something which sped up the corrosion process..." Reno ranted and showed his sister the green impression on his skin. "Ah, but why did you suddenly switched to attacking the duoluozhong instead?"

If Lin Sanjiu didn't notice and react in time, Reno would have died there and then after a few attacks.

"It is largely due to luck," Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling a retrospective fear when she remembered the events, "When you came out from the bathroom and saw that no one was around, you said: Gosh. Did they disappear again?"

Lin Sanjiu realized that something was wrong when she heard that sentence. At that time, she had the impression the Reno she met incidentally in the corridor (who was looking for hers and Rena) and the Reno with the mark on his wrist was one and the same person, that is the real Reno. In other words, only the real Reno found Lin Sanjiu and Rena missing twice. The fake Reno did not meet such a situation and he did not need to mutter this to himself when no one was around.

If that was the tipping point that made Lin Sanjiu reconsider her suspicions. She was finally convinced when she saw Reno shivering with chattering teeth as if he was very cold. As expected, after being attacked, that fake Rena could no longer maintain its form. It escaped in a hurry.

"However, after I rushed into the corridor and lost sight of the fake Rena, I didn't return to the same room... The room with the fake Reno had taken its place."

Due to this ingenious combination of factors, Lin Sanjiu started believing that the fake Reno was real. When both of them went upstairs, they found the real Rena successfully. This was because the fake Reno had to be by the real Rena. Moreover, at that point, the cotton wadding called Lin Sanjiu was totally deceived and would no longer pose as a troublesome pest.

When Lin Sanjiu had explained this part, the dusty floor was already covered by many lines of words. Without any space left, Lin Sanjiu had no choice but to write on her skull again. After resting for such a long time and writing so much, she regained her first vertebrae. After Lin Sanjiu had polished and strengthened her higher consciousness, she could use her higher consciousness for a longer time and its recovery speed was much quicker. After reading the extensive prose on the floor, Reno crooked his head and his face turned bitter.

"Wait. You say you went upstairs with the fake Reno... But, I saw you on another floor."

Lin Sanjiu floated silently for a moment before the words on her skulls confirmed his suspicion, "That's not me. I guess that fake Rena, who was nearly killed, couldn't recover its original form in a short time. So, it must have chosen to impersonate me, due to my smaller size."

Rena was stunned as she read what Lin Sanjiu wrote. Based on Lin Sanjiu's description, there were three narratives progressing at the same time. Every now and then, they would influence each other. Rena never even thought that it would be so complicated.

Lin Sanjiu was just inwardly thankful that they were very lucky. Without using her [Consciousness Mimicry], she wouldn't discover who the real Reno was if she had not used her Diary Card.

However, when she finished reading her Diary Card. The building also sensed that she had discovered something, so it moved the fake Reno from his original floor to the 26th floor. This was probably to confuse Lin Sanjiu so that she would lose her target.

At the same time, the fake Lin Sanjiu and the real Reno decided to go to the 26th floor to find for Rena.

"Why did the building lead me to Rena? There was already a duoluo zhong by my side..." Reno asked unable to understand the logic behind that decision. On the other, Lin Sanjiu quickly figured that out. The biggest difference between Lin Sanjiu and the siblings was that she was just a higher consciousness being. This probably made it very hard for the duoluo zhong to imitate.

When the duoluo zhong impersonated Reno, it only needed to maintain Reno's appearance. When it impersonated Rena, it doesn't have to stretch its body up to two meters every now and then. Whereas, Lin Sanjiu, who could morph herself into many shapes and even form words in midair, wasn't that easy to imitate convincingly.

Reno didn't even need to do much. If he tried to communicate

with the fake Lin Sanjiu, the duoluo zhong would probably slip up.

As for the events which played out on the 26th floor, Rena explained, "At that time, I followed the fake Reno up to the 26th floor. We were supposed to each take a corridor. According to him, we not only had to look for Lin Sanjiu, but we had the obligation to search every inch for the duoluo zhong that was creating all sorts of trouble there as the 26th floor was the most suspicious. Don't you think that made sense? I agreed and when I was checking one of the apartment units, both of you entered the door without any warning..."

Things became interesting after that. The two teenagers, who had each been accompanied by a duoluo zhong for the past few hours without even a shred of suspicion, became paranoid after their experiences. When the real siblings reunited, they instead grew very suspicious of each other.

As they were both guarded, none of them could suddenly take any action. The siblings started grilling each other on their past experiences. However, after so many journeys together over so many years, they each have their own angle and perspective on a similar event. So, obviously, their memories of the same event could be different. Furthermore, they weren't on good terms and were always quarreling.

Under such circumstances, even when the other party could answer the questions, they would start wondering about why that person doesn't know this or that. When the other party is unable to answer, it would just create a confirmatory bias to prove that 'ah, this person isn't my brother/sister'.

When they were on the 26th floor, Rena was once again badly deceived.

"According to Lin Sanjiu theory that the building shifts the apartment units around like toy blocks, when my brother entered the bathroom, the building shifted the bathroom away. He was

replaced by the fake Reno. So, the person that walked out wasn't even my brother," Rena concluded and turned to pat Reno's shoulder, "You might not know this, but I was scared witless! When I peeped at you, I could see your back, yet your face was looking back at me..."

"At that time, it didn't feel like I was being shifted," Reno said puzzledly. "When I came out of the bathroom, I saw Rena but I didn't see Lin Sanjiu."

"From what you say, that duoluo zhong recovered? It changed into my appearance again..." Rena asked, "Then, why didn't the building keep things this way? Why did it let my brother return?"

Lin Sanjiu felt as if she had written all the words she could write in her entire life. She slowly scribbled, "Because, that would help it reach its goal quicker. The building couldn't predict if I would fly here and there again. In fact, I did fly around the entire building once. To prevent me from spoiling its plans, I think it changed its strategy. It wanted to make both of you suspect each other and attack each other."

Its strategy nearly worked. Rena immediately looked at her brother apologetically, but before he realized that, she hastily turned her eyes away.

"At that point, how did you know we were both ourselves?" Rena asked, tilting her head to look at Lin Sanjiu. The way she crooked her head resembled what Reno did previously, it was quite obvious that they were blood-related.

"He said to me, 'That's right, Lin Sanjiu why have you been running around these two days?'" Lin Sanjiu wrote those words in bold, "I hadn't been running around those two days because you were watching me closely. I was in the apartment all this time... That would only mean that the Reno who said this had been in an environment that I wasn't around. By then, I already had the vague theory about the toy blocks. When I heard what he said, I

knew something was wrong. He must have been shifted to another space previously! If that was true, he must be the real Reno."

Lin Sanjiu didn't have to mention their escape. Both siblings clicked their tongue, lamenting. Reno even praised Lin Sanjiu, "Who would have known that you're this smart." Hearing this, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling slightly pleased with herself. This time she didn't rely on Nüwa's wisdom to solve this difficult problem. This gave Lin Sanjiu a feeling like she was heading closer toward some sort of high benchmark.

"Ah. A B-level world is indeed dangerous," Reno let out a long sigh. He lay supine on the ground just outside the train station. "I feel a little like giving up on the training. I just want to find a place to quickly pass our remaining time here."

Reno followed her brother and also laid on the ground. She laughed and said, "Coward!"

...?

When Reno and Lin Sanjiu suddenly became silent, Rena laughed out loudly, "Did I scare you guys? Are you stupid? If I hadn't learned that word after reading what Lin Sanjiu wrote, you guys should be worried!"

While the siblings burst out into bouts of laughter, Lin Sanjiu felt a great sense of relief. Lin Sanjiu followed the siblings, stretched herself and lowered herself to the ground. Before they knew it, a thread of blue peeked through the thick gray clouds that hung above them.

Chapter 219: Suspicious Mrs. Manas

The three people lay on the floor quietly. After a while, Lin Sanjiu realized that her surroundings grew silent. She immediately flew up from the ground to look and found the siblings with their eyes shut. Both of them had fainted. Reno and Rena's wounds were worse than she thought, especially Reno, who released those explosives too close to himself. His legs were covered by countless metal shards. Blood mixed with fat cells oozed out from his wounds making his pants stick to his legs. Lin Sanjiu wanted to, but couldn't even check his wounds.

With their body conditions, they naturally weren't going anywhere.

After searching the two siblings, Lin Sanjiu found a knife. She morphed herself into two fingers to pinch the knife. Then, she used the knife to cut Reno's pants, revealing his large patch of ghastly-looking wounds. The 'gear' which had been damaged appeared no different from normal tattered clothes. Lin Sanjiu cut off a few cleaner bits of fabrics and cleaned the area around his wounds before stopping. There were quite a few pharmacies nearby, but the rubbing alcohol and medicine in those stores were already corroded by black matter long ago. She didn't have the courage to use those things on the siblings, who were now very weak.

And just like that, Lin Sanjiu stayed by the unconscious siblings' side, guarding them a little anxiously. Based on her own judgment, she fed them some water they had with them and placed headrests made of rags under their heads... This was the limit to what she could do. The siblings could only depend on their own body constitution to recover.

The skies grew dark once again. Considering this, daylight in Kisaragi Station World only lasted for four to five hours. In addition to that, there were always gray, gloomy clouds in the sky,

creating an atmosphere which seemed devoid of life.

Darkness came over them, covering the scenery with a quiet dark shadow.

"This is weird... Are there really no survivors in this world?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself, overcome by boredom, as she circled the siblings.

Corpses eventually attract flies. In the same manner, the two half-dead humans on the ground attracted quite a lot of duoluozhongs. Sometimes, when Lin Sanjiu wasn't as vigilant, she might even find a greenish shadow looming between the siblings. She had to chase them all away every ten minutes or so and even exorcised a few duoluozhongs. They gave her quite a bit of trouble.

Originally, she told Mrs. Manas to keep a lookout for her so she could do a bit of training. However, she was called to 'chase away flies' every few minutes. Naturally, she couldn't do anything else but let her higher consciousness recover at its own speed. Luckily, her training over this period of time was not in vain, and the recovery speed of her higher consciousness was now much faster.

Under the tar-black skies, two motionless bodies lay under the pale, white light that shone from the interior of the train station. A skull floated around them, as a few vertebrae slowly formed from the top of its spine. "If anyone saw us, they would probably think that a duoluozhong had just killed two people, right?" When that thought disappeared from Lin Sanjiu's mind, she suddenly heard Mrs. Manas grumbling, "If you are that free, can you think of something more positive?"

"Huh?" Lin Sanjiu made a meaningless sound in her head.

Almost as if lazy to explain herself, Mrs. Manas activated Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness scanning ability and presented the image to Lin Sanjiu. The area it covered was much wider than what Lin Sanjiu had seen previously, so she was a little shocked by that.

"Stop acting like a country bumpkin." For some reasons, Mrs. Manas sounded very unhappy. "Your ability has improved, so it is just common sense that you can now scan a wider area... Is this something very shocking?"

That was theoretically true. However, Lin Sanjiu had been 'conserving her resources', so she always kept her scanning range only within the radius of a few meters. Because of that, it had become something habitual to her. When her scanning range was pushed to nearly one kilometer in radius, she couldn't really adapt to seeing that much detail in such a large area. At the same time, Lin Sanjiu found out why Mrs. Manas was unhappy.

"Croaker!" Mrs. Manas mumbled.

At the edge of her scanning range, about a kilometer away from them, there was a row of office buildings. There were a few black shadows standing on the rooftop of one of the buildings and they were pointing at the train station. With a single thought, Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness allowed her to zoom in on the people. The small black shadows instantly became clear in her mind.

Well, now she knows why she was called a croaker. Her question about other survivors was now being answered directly by the image in her head. The few people leaning over the edge of the roof of that building had cautious faces. The person who seemed to be the leader of the team said something as he pointed to Lin Sanjiu. Then, he made a killing gesture with his arms.

Even though Lin Sanjiu could not hear them, from what she saw, she could sense that they were telling each other something like, "There is a powerful one in front of the train station. Guys, don't show any mercy."

"Huh? Why are these troublesome things happening..." Lin Sanjiu first reaction was to make a grievous comment, "Don't tell me everyone can actually see my higher consciousness form?"

"Of course not," Mrs. Manas replied.

"I mean, these two kids are fully geared to gain experience in this place. It isn't that weird that they can see me. But, why can some random people there see me?"

"If these two kids have their own methods of seeing you. There are definitely other ways in this world that would allow people to see higher consciousness entities. Explaining why you meet people that can see you consecutively... Um, coincidence." Mrs. Manas answered unhurriedly and sounded quite irresponsible. With her keen intuition, Lin Sanjiu immediately sensed that something was amiss.

"Are you hiding something from me?" Lin Sanjiu asked skeptically. In the meantime, the small team that was still some distance away wouldn't reach her so quickly. She had some time to prepare.

Suspiciously, Mrs. Manas grew silent for a while before she replied, "I didn't." Her voice sharpened, making it rather obvious that she was faking innocence. After looking at the people in the image, Lin Sanjiu weighed her priorities and decided to let the matter with Mrs. Manas rest. If she thought about it carefully, that teacher probably hid more than one thing from her. Lin Sanjiu was determined to find a good opportunity to count these debts. She suppressed her suspicion and split her body into two long 'ropes'. She decided that she would move the siblings to another place before those people came. She always felt that it was unnecessary to engage in any random meaningless fights.

There was no way Lin Sanjiu would go to any of the residential areas nearby. Even though the residential buildings around here looked very different from where that demonic building was, she didn't want to take any risks with the siblings' current condition. Going to the office buildings in the opposite direction was also not an option. From the looks of it, they could only hide in those pharmacy stores nearby. After she found a hiding place, she

started pulling the siblings toward the spot. The process was much harder than she anticipated. With her current strength, she could wrap herself around one of them and lift them slightly off the ground. However, it takes up too much energy for her to carry both of them at the same time. She thought that she could carry them over one by one. However, that was not the case. When Lin Sanjiu carried Reno and flew a few meters toward the pharmacy store she had chosen, she turned her 'head' casually and looked behind. At that point, she couldn't help abandoning Reno to rush over to Rena's side.

"Get lost! Yes, you!" Lin Sanjiu scolded before she condensed herself into a small missile and shot herself to the spot beside Rena. A little girl with two braided pigtails was facing Rena with her back. Shocked, that little thing ran into the train station before turning around and showing another pair of braided pigtails. That thing was an example of those famous ghosts who show the back of their head even when they turn around.

Lin Sanjiu was already fed up with those pestering spirits. She sped toward the child's back. It made a strange wail and the upper body of the child lost its form and became a cloud of green smoke. Meanwhile, it continued running to the depths of the train station anxiously with the bottom half of its body. Lin Sanjiu stopped herself then. After spending so much effort chasing off just one duoluo zhong, she floated up once more. She looked through the glass walls of the train station and noticed that something was kneeling by Reno's side.

When Mrs. Manas 'witness' Lin Sanjiu flying between the two siblings busily before finally moving them to the pharmacy store, she couldn't help sighing.

"While you desperately move to and fro between the siblings, do you think you can conceal your tracks? I guess those people could already tell where you are heading. I guess they're coming soon," Mrs. Manas said, almost as if disappointed by Lin Sanjiu's

performance.

Lin Sanjiu didn't seem to mind. She acknowledged the teacher's words half-heartedly. Next, she checked the interior of the store cautiously. She chose the smallest pharmacy store on purpose so she could keep her eyes on the siblings and protect them at all times.

"Look at them, they probably just want to board the train," Lin Sanjiu said while she slipped behind the counter. She found herself staring straight at a old man with huge eyes. She stretched her body and smacked the old man's face. The old man shrieked and disappeared into a cloud of smoke. Then, she added, "We were blocking the entrance just now, so it is reasonable to think that they had no choice but to fight with us then. Since I have avoided them, they would just head for the train. Why would they still bother me?"

Her words made sense—on the premise that the people only wanted to take the train. After about twenty minutes, Lin Sanjiu could hear some shuffling footsteps from the direction of the train station. She was guarding the siblings alone in the jet-black darkness of the night.

If she didn't focus her higher consciousness in that direction, preparing for their arrival, she would not have noticed that bit of sound. Their footsteps were very soft. Almost as soft as a cat creeping across a carpet. It was so soft that Lin Sanjiu wondered if she imagined those sounds as she looked at the image of them in her head. She started to feel a little nervous.

It was a team of four, and they were all men. Differing from her guess, they were obviously not survivors of this world. Not only were they all wearing the same dark blue combat uniforms, from their coordinated movements, it was obvious that they had been working together in a team for a long time. From her observation, they weren't particularly trying to conceal themselves, yet they moved very quietly. Apparently, they had been professionally

trained.

"Who are these people?" Lin Sanjiu mumbled to herself, but Mrs. Manas certainly did not have an answer.

The team of four was led by the tall, muscular man she had seen previously. They stopped outside the entrance of the train station. They spread themselves out in a semi-circle as they watched their surroundings vigilantly. The white light from the train station shone on the men, revealing their features very clearly. When Lin Sanjiu saw them so clearly, she almost couldn't curb herself from immediately waking the siblings...

"Please look at them! That is what we call fully-equipped!" Lin Sanjiu complained to Mrs. Manas emotionally, "Look at that heavy machine gun! Look at those boots! That pistol holder! And those combat uniforms!" From the tone of her voice, it was as if she wanted to just rush over and snatch those equipment for herself.

"Do you think gunpowder works here?" Mrs. Manas was surprisingly calm, "Maybe they are just some soldiers from another world. They probably haven't got the full crappy Kisaragi Station experience."

Lin Sanjiu looked at the team obsessively, so the teacher couldn't tell if she heard her.

"Hey, maybe they didn't even see you. Maybe, they can't even see the spirits here..." Mrs. Manas had not even finished her gloating remark when a woman slowly walked out from the train station.

Perhaps, the word 'walk' wasn't the best word to use. The woman's legs were twisted together like wrung clothes, as if all the bones in her legs had been shattered. She slowly 'slithered' out of the train station. As she got closer to the men, her smile grew wider. Her two black eyes sockets narrowed. Mrs. Manas seemed to be correct. The four men' expression did not change even one bit as if they did not notice the thing creeping toward them.

The woman seemed unable to control her exaggerated wide grin. She slowly stretched out her hands and was just about to touch the shoulders of the man closest to her when he suddenly moved his shoulder. Without even turning his head, he pointed his gun behind him, almost uncaringly, and shot at her. A blue flame exploded in the woman's face. Before the expression on her face could change, she already became a cloud of smoke.

"Hey! Don't waste your bullets on these things!" the person who seemed to be their leader shouted. While Lin Sanjiu and Mrs. Manas were stunned by the events that unfolded, the leader stopped for a moment and ordered, "Don't forget our mission here. I want you to spread out and search for that skull!"

Chapter 220: No Escaping a Topsy-turvy Fate

If Reno wasn't unconscious, Lin Sanjiu would have suspected that she had been cursed by another one of his almanac pages. "So my energies for the day make it unsuitable for me to be outside?" Lin Sanjiu watched from afar as the four members of the team dispersed. "I don't even know them, why do they have to give me trouble?" Lin Sanjiu stated rhetorically.

Lin Sanjiu didn't know anyone in that team. They were total strangers to her. Yet, when she saw how they methodically searched every inch of their surroundings, almost adamant to find her, she couldn't help feeling that they were targeting her on purpose.

"Didn't they just spot me from afar?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. If she was still in her own body, Lin Sanjiu wouldn't be that wary about fighting them. Even if she couldn't win, she could run away. However, she did not have any weapons or Special Items now. She didn't even have her body! On the other hand, those people seemed to be well-equipped and well-trained. There was no way she could defeat them. To make things worse, she had the two burdens behind her that she had to protect.

"Is this alright?" Mrs. Manas asked worriedly in Lin Sanjiu's mind after looking at the kids.

"I don't have any other choice," Lin Sanjiu answered as she scanned the area around the pharmacy store once. Noting that the four-man team had not closed in on them, she immediately stuffed Rena's legs into a cupboard as if she was trying to stuff a winter blanket back into its storing spot.

Even though this sounds weird—that was the last part of Rena's body that Lin Sanjiu had to conceal. Before Rena's legs fell out of the cupboard, Lin Sanjiu closed the door. She felt like a murderer

hiding a victim.

"If I am alone, I can just run away. Worst come to worst, I would just fly. I don't believe they can't suddenly fly. But, I really feel very worried for the kids if I just leave them out there." Even though Lin Sanjiu meant well, she didn't choose a very suitable place to hide these two patients. She squished Rena into a ball and hid the girl in a cupboard. But the store was too small, so she couldn't find another hiding place for Reno. Lin Sanjiu could only compromise while she placed Reno in a corner of the store, without any attempts to hide him. With some tattered fabrics from his pants, she painted his face with blood. After her 'makeup', Reno who sat slumped in the corner of the store didn't block the passageway and did appear to look like 'just another corpse'.

"I'll have to leave the rest to fate... Since they're coming for me, I don't think they will make things difficult for the kids," Lin Sanjiu sighed lightly and drifted out of the backdoor stealthily.

Even though she did not stop scanning the area around her, she was unable to track everyone. Whenever the men were in cover or walked into any buildings, she couldn't see their movements. After waiting for a few minutes, a blond man who was armed with a machine gun came out from the opposite shop. Finally, he was heading to that pharmacy store.

The moment he stepped into the store, Lin Sanjiu captured his face clearly in her scanning range. The person who had destroyed the 'slithering woman' seemed to be this man. Though his ballistic eyewear covered almost half his face, she could see that the man behind those lenses, was quite handsome. He was about thirty, had broad shoulders and rippling muscles. His facial features were sharp and distinct, the type to leave a lasting impression.

When the blond man placed one foot at the entrance and scanned the store quickly. He withdrew backward and stopped. Lin Sanjiu immediately tensed up, she kept her 'eyes' on him.

The crucial part only came when he entered the store. The blond man stood for a while outside the store. He didn't enter the store impulsively, instead, he pressed a few buttons on his eyewear. In just one second, he immediately turned to look at Reno who was lying in the corner of the store.

"That eyewear has thermal imaging!" Lin Sanjiu understood immediately, feeling silently a little shocked. Even though Reno's breathing was so shallow that it was almost undetectable, his body temperature glowed like a beacon in the dark. He was impossible to miss. When Lin Sanjiu saw the blond man walking toward Reno, she became desperate. At that moment, she didn't think too much. and just smashed her head against the back door.

Just when she made a colliding sound with the door, the blond man had already turned his machine gun to the door. A stream of blue flames spewed from his gun. Luckily, Lin Sanjiu was prepared. Before anything else happened, she had already twisted her body and flew upward. The blue flames engulfed the entire door and nearly hit her. It missed and landed on the ground behind her. At that instant, the ground was lit brightly by a blue light.

At the same time, that light acted like a flare. Other members of the team rushed over and they quickly surrounded the pharmacy store.

Lin Sanjiu was so nervous that she couldn't even take a breath. She used all her energy and flew straight up into the sky. She reduced her scanning range to a minimum and concentrated every bit of her higher consciousness on flying upward. From the looks of the team's equipment, if she was hit by their firearms, she probably wouldn't survive.

Seeing that translucent skull thing shooting up into the sky like a fire arrow, the team leader shouted something. Following which, one of the members with a smaller stature took off a black box from his back. He opened the box swiftly and assembled the item in the box in just a few seconds. He assembled the parts to create a

small black receiver.

Lin Sanjiu didn't have the slightest interest to find out what that was. As she flew upward with her full speed, she was already near 1000 meters in the sky. "This should be high enough, right?" She mumbled. After that, she stopped and sped in a random direction.

If she changed her direction when she was still too close to the ground, it was very easy for the men to chase after her. Once she was 1000 meters above them, it was different. In a breath's time, she left the men's range of vision.

"It should be safe, I..." Before Lin Sanjiu thought of the word 'think' in her head, she felt a strong gust of wind behind her. A black shadow was chasing behind with an unbelievable speed. As it broke through the air, it even created a sound like a train whistle.

"What is that!" Mrs. Manas got a shock, "It is going to reach you in about 30 seconds with that speed!"

"I know that, of course." Lin Sanjiu replied frustratedly in her mind. Maintaining her maximum speed, she made a sharp 90° turn, changing her course of direction instantly. Unfortunately, that black thing changed directions with her. Instead of slowing down, it seemed to be getting faster.

Lin Sanjiu didn't give up. She changed directions a few more times but it was all useless. The whistling sound from that black item was quickly reaching her. At the same time, her attempts to get away from that team had failed. It was difficult to track her as she changed directions high above the sky. But the black item apparently could communicate to its receiver on the ground. The team of four followed the directions from the receiver that the smaller man was holding so they were chasing tightly behind Lin Sanjiu from the ground.

"Is this some sort of new guided missile?" Lin Sanjiu cursed, "Just moments before they were too stingy to even use a bullet and now they actually use a guided missile on me?"

"I believe you better think of a way to get out of this!" Mrs. Manas had never sounded so anxious before, "That thing will reach you in ten seconds!"

"This shi*ty ordeal was really uncalled for!" Lin Sanjiu gritted her teeth and made another sharp turn. Exhausting every bit of her energy, she managed to increase her speed. The translucent skull shot across the sky like a faint star. This was quickly followed by a black line.

"Huh? That thing can accelerate?" The short member who was holding the receiver commented as continued running at lightning speed.

"No surprise here." Even though the leader was running almost as fast as a racing car, his breathing was stable as he spoke, "Even with its speed, it can outrun 'Gangrene Chaser' no matter how many turns it makes!"

The blond man and another gruff-looking brute ran behind the two of them silently while matching their speed. Theoretically, it was impossible to escape. She was limited by the amount of higher consciousness she possessed. Even if she could move at the same speed as the thing that was chasing her, she couldn't possibly fly on forever. Furthermore, from the speed of that black thing, it was going to hit her in a few seconds.

"Five!" Mrs. Manas voice sharpened as she counted the seconds. Lin Sanjiu suddenly withdrew her higher consciousness propelling her forward. Instead, she converted that higher consciousness into a downward weight. She fell toward the ground quickly, as if skydiving from a height of one kilometer.

"Four!"

After flying the near the ground for some time, Lin Sanjiu flattened her body and flew past a black obstruction. That black item was very fast but it wasn't that nimble. "Crash!" It destroyed the obstruction near the ground in front of it but continued

chasing her.

"Three!"

Lin Sanjiu could hear the sonic boom from the item as the air was torn apart. It filled her mind giving her little time to think. As the strong wind hit her body, she felt numb as if the wind had blown away her mind.

"Two!"

Overwhelmed by her high levels of anxiety and fear, Lin Sanjiu nearly made a bad decision. Even while flying, she desperately scanned her surroundings. She gritted her teeth and shut down her scanning ability. She rushed forward in total darkness.

Even after some time, Lin Sanjiu did not hear Mrs. Manas saying 'one'.

Lin Sanjiu could not feel pain or changes in the temperature when she was in her higher consciousness form. Even if that item really hit her and she was about to vanish into nothingness, Lin Sanjiu wouldn't even be able to sense anything.

Time seemed to freeze at that moment of darkness. It was like a blink of an eye, yet as if a hundred years had passed.

"Alright, I think everything is alright now..." Mrs. Manas voice rang out from the darkness in Lin Sanjiu's mind after an unknown amount of time had passed. Lin Sanjiu couldn't really describe what she was feeling at that moment. She felt a sort of warmth which accompanied the chill of that near-death experience. It gradually warmed up her mind once again so that her thoughts started flowing. She tested her ability and once again she activated her scanning. Once again, she saw the world around her in her mind.

Even though Lin Sanjiu had already prepared herself, she couldn't help feeling a frigid chill which grew from the bottom of her heart when she saw her surroundings. Not far from her, 'Reno'

stared directly at her, revealing half his face from behind a wall. Those pair of eyes looked frighteningly large and black. She saw a warped, distorted living room right in front of her. She felt as if she was looking at the room, from the ceiling to the floor, through a funhouse mirror. The room had been pulled into a funnel shape as the building 'gripped' the black item which was chasing after her just a second ago.

This was the first time she had the chance to have a good look at that item chasing her. It was a thin, tube-like item which looked like an arrow. At the tail end of the item were two blue lights which were blinking faintly. It seemed like it was struggling and trying to free itself from the building. Lin Sanjiu watched it nervously for two seconds and realized that the 'arrow' had been trapped firmly. Seeing that it wasn't getting free anytime soon, Lin Sanjiu let out a sigh of relief.

She saw 'Reno's' familiar face near her. His eyes shifted slowly in a creepy manner. As the building was now warped, she didn't know where that duoluozhong's body went. It reached out with its two arms as if it was planning to crawl toward Lin Sanjiu. She instantly felt very uncomfortable. She turned away and decided to leave while the black item was trapped and before those four men found her.

That window from which she entered was in a long, deformed snake-like shape. Lin Sanjiu controlled the creeped-out feeling in her heart and sped toward the window.

"Where are you going?" Lin Sanjiu heard 'Reno's' youthful voice behind her as he spoke with an odd tone, "One of the people who left with you is an imposter. Wait for me. I'll tell you..."

"Motherf*cker!" Lin Sanjiu cursed vehemently. She could feel goosebumps on her non-existent body. After that, she flew out of the window. She couldn't remember the details of the next split second which followed no matter how hard she tried.

From her memory, she could only remember seeing a sudden light and some undiscernable noise. Then, her world became topsy-turvy. After another split second, when she recovered, she found that she was trapped in something. She was upside-down and she discovered that she was held in an item which the blond man was holding.

"Don't try anything funny," the blond man flashed a humorless smile, revealing his pearly white teeth. "Trust me, you don't want to end up in my team leader's hand."

Chapter 221: 221

There exist a type of person that would become more cool-headed the direr the situation they were in.

When Lin Sanjiu's gaze fell on the blond man in front of her, she felt as if someone had doused her head with a bucket of ice water. Before she could feel any panic or fear, her mind rapidly grew calmer. As she scanned the area around her, Lin Sanjiu quickly understood the situation she was in.

She was flying out of the 26th floor when she was suddenly trapped in a cylindrical item on the floor in less than a second. By the looks of it, she had been 'sucked' into that item.

"Is it some sort of powerful Special Item?" Mrs. Manas suddenly mumbled. After hearing her words, Lin Sanjiu felt herself feeling less worried. Her original skull form was forced into a long cylindrical shape. The only features which remained were Lin Sanjiu's two eyes sockets. She was 'staring' out from the transparent glass cylinder. Lin Sanjiu did not try to throw herself against the glass wall. She didn't even struggle. She just floated in the cylinder observing her outside world silently.

"Huh? Why are you so quiet?" The blond man lifted a brow. "You were zooming around, trying to escape us just moments ago... Are you smart or stupid?" He spoke in a rather intimate tone, almost as if he was putting himself in her shoes. One could almost mistake him as an old friend of Lin Sanjiu's. Lin Sanjiu ignored him.

The blond man was the only person nearby. Lin Sanjiu didn't know where the other members of his team were. The small black tower which launched the arrow into the air was now sitting quietly on the floor. The building's lobby was not far from them.

"Did the other members enter the building? " That thought surfaced in Lin Sanjiu's mind involuntarily. "If that was the case, it would be great! This would create a good opportunity for me to

escape!"

Unfortunately, her higher consciousness scanning did not allow for her to see through walls. Looking through the 'glass' of the cylinder she was in, she could see what was outside the container. However, she could not see if there was anyone in the lobby, so she couldn't confirm anything.

Lin Sanjiu considered her situation. The blond man caught her but he didn't attempt to make any signals and he didn't even inform his teammates... After thinking for a few seconds, Lin Sanjiu wrote a question while the man kept his gaze on her, "Did they enter that building?"

"You a rare duoluo zhong..." the blond man praised softly, but he didn't answer her question. "You made that 'Gangrene Chaser' chase after you for such a long time and even led it into a trap. I think you must be very powerful, right?"

His accent sounded very weird. Even though his voice was mellow and rich, it just sounded weird. It was as if he was using another language to speak Mandarin. Lin Sanjiu didn't think too much about it. In fact, facing such an attitude, Lin Sanjiu only allowed herself to feel fretful for a few minutes. Following which, she realized that if she read between the lines, she already had her answer: his teammates had entered the building. If she had made a wrong guess, that man wouldn't praise her.

"Did they entered the building to retrieve that arrow? Can that demonic spirit swallow three people at once? Why didn't this blond man follow them into the building?" The memory of the incident that happened at the entrance of the train station gradually surfaced in Lin Sanjiu's mind. She deliberated over her words and wrote, "Your team's mission is to get duoluo zhongs..."

Lin Sanjiu couldn't think of another answer to their actions. This was the first time she met these people, they didn't have any bad blood between them and she even avoided crossing their path by

moving away discreetly. However, the team chased after her so fervently once they saw her. On top of that, this item that the man was using merely served to trap her. Since they didn't kill her immediately, Lin Sanjiu could somehow guess their objectives.

"Are you all trying to catch powerful duoluo zhongs?"

"Huh?" the blond man suddenly pushed up his eyewear, revealing a pair of long narrow eyes. Lin Sanjiu had seen quite a few handsome men during her journey, like Hei Zeji, Li Zhijun and Gong Daoyi from the previous world. Their handsome looks were all hard to come by. But this was the first time seeing a man with such stunning features. It was almost heart-gripping. Under the faint light of the night sky, his dark green eyes looked as deep as a pool in a forest. Under the sunlight, his pair of eyes would probably look like clear, flawless jade.

But the man's expression wasn't as easy to read. "How did you deduce that?" He raised a brow and asked with some interest.

Lin Sanjiu didn't want to waste time chatting with him. "You caught the wrong person. I am not a duoluo zhong. Much less a powerful one..." Noticing that the man's expression didn't change, Lin Sanjiu figured that he didn't believe her. She added, "But, I know where you can find something like that."

The blond man grinned. It was almost as if his face could shine. He sat down on the ground lazily, acting like he was uninterested in what she had to say. However, Lin Sanjiu already noticed the glint that flashed in his eyes.

"You just want me to let you go, right?" He looked down as he rubbed the faint stubble on his chin. "That's impossible. Don't even waste your time trying."

"Bullsh*t. How would I know if I didn't try?" Lin Sanjiu scolded him silently in her mind. Unaffected, she continued writing, "If you want, I can tell you where you can find a powerful duoluo zhong... And, your teammates won't even hear a hint of it."

After she finished her sentence, she examined the man's expression a little anxiously. Lin Sanjiu had placed all her bets on the possibility that the man had a somewhat bad working relationship with his team.

As expected, the man narrowed his eyes again. His thick lashes created two smooth arcs. He hesitated and said mildly, "Oh?"

"That my chance!" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. Lin Sanjiu's heart raced. Even though she didn't know why they were trying to catch duoluozhongs and why this man wanted to keep those duoluozhongs for himself, she knew that as long as he was tempted by her offer, she had a chance to escape.

"In exchange, when you catch that powerful duoluozhong, I hope you let me go."

The blond man read her words and looked at her eye sockets. His dark green eyes had a sort of magnetism. "Aren't you afraid that I will go back on my words?"

"It isn't as if I have a choice," Lin Sanjiu wrote quietly. "I don't have right to make any bargains right now. This is the best I can do. I will leave to rest to fate."

"I like your attitude." The blond man's smile suddenly grew wide. Almost in a childish manner, he reached for the container and shook it lightly twice, as if he was shaking her hands. "I accept your deal. I am Silvan."

Chapter 222: Getting Others to Do Your Dirty Work

In all fairness, Lin Sanjiu had to admit that if she was in Silvan's position, she wouldn't dare to do such a brazen thing. Firstly, she wouldn't trust an enemy who was obviously trying to escape. However, Silvan seemed to trust her words instantly. He didn't show even a hint of hesitation. Courageous wasn't the right word to describe this man, instead, he exuded a sort of assertiveness. He didn't even have to explain himself. Lin Sanjiu could feel that his assertiveness came from a confidence that was near arrogance. Apparently, he did not even care about the possible risks involved.

He basically showed a 'I know you are up to something but I don't care' attitude.

"Can such a person be just a member of a small team?" Lin Sanjiu tried to recall what the other members looked like, but she only had a hazy impression. None of them left such a lasting impression as Silvan.

Silvan stood in the quiet, dim elevator lobby of the building. He smacked the upward button beside the elevator absent-mindedly. The elevator immediately hummed softly as it came down from the 26th floor. Just a day ago, Lin Sanjiu probably wouldn't believe that she would return to this building voluntarily.

But her mentality was totally different now. No matter what this building was planning, she hoped that it would just act quickly. "My teammates did enter this building to retrieve that 'Gangrene Chaser'... But, how did you know that they did find that duoluozhong first?" As he said that, Silvan had already pulled down his ballistic eyewear and fit them properly on his face once again. With his striking looks half concealed, he immediately looked more reserved, appearing to be just an average handsome man. Lin Sanjiu stopped for a moment and tried to listen for the

sounds within her scanning range.

There was only a dead-like silence in the building. She couldn't hear a single noise.

"If they found that item, it wouldn't be this quiet," Lin Sanjiu wrote quickly. Of course, she hid the fact that the silence proved that his teammates had already fallen into the building's trap. Silvan didn't reply, instead, he stared at the numeral display in the elevator.

After some time, he asked, "Which floor?"

"26." Lin Sanjiu wrote.

Even though the black arrow was always trapped on the 26th floor, Lin Sanjiu was confident that when they went there, they would not find the black arrow. The elevator door open slowly.

"You mentioned that you are not a duoluo zhong. What are you then?" Silvan asked curiously as he pressed the button marked 26. He sounded sincere, but Lin Sanjiu couldn't really tell if he believed her. "Someone who didn't corrode their own eyes with black matter probably can't see you, right?"

"So, this team used the same method..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. She gave him an ambiguous answer, "This is my ability. I can revert back to my human form." After that, Lin Sanjiu had a sudden thought. She remembered that the siblings had told her that they learn about the method of corroding their eyes from someone else's experience when they were back in Red Nautilus. If that was the case—

"Could you guys be from the Twelve Centrum?" she couldn't help asking.

Silvan lowered his head slightly. He was holding the cylindrical container that Lin Sanjiu was in. He eyed Lin Sanjiu and immediately laughed.

"You too? But if you are from the Twelve World Centrum, how

could you not recognize this?" He patted the emblem on his shoulder lightly as he said this. His tone was a little weird when he said the word 'this'. As he pointed to it, he revealed his slight contempt and a subtle amusement before pulling his slender fingers away.

Lin Sanjiu had noticed that emblem ages ago, but she didn't know what it symbolized. The emblem had a silver black outline. In the middle, there was a beautiful warhammer. There was an eagle with extended wings in the background of the emblem. It looked imposing.

Just when she was feeling a little hesitant as to whether she should question the man further, Silvan spoke first.

"There's no harm in telling you," he said indifferently, but he seemed to be holding back some emotions, "I didn't come here from any of the worlds in the Twelve World Centrum... I come from 'The Munitions Factory'."

"The Munitions Factory!" Lin Sanjiu, who was in the container, was shocked when she heard this. She had heard the name of this place many times. She heard it first from Shen Lianqi and recently from siblings. Almost everyone from the Twelve Centrum had mentioned this name. Between the lines, Lin Sanjiu could tell that The Munitions Factory was an unavoidable subject of discussion if you lived in the Twelve Worlds Centrum. It seemed to be some sort of large organization.

That explained why the men were so well-equipped. In her higher consciousness form, Lin Sanjiu had been sucked into this container without even a chance to resist.

"But why does The Munitions Factory need to catch duoluo zhongs?" Lin Sanjiu pondered.

Noticing that the weird thing in the container had not responded for some time, Silvan seemed a little baffled. "Apparently, you are not from the Twelve World Centrum," he said with certainty. His

following words immediately stunned Lin Sanjiu, "You probably met residents from the Twelve World Centrum. Speaking of which... The people who were lying at the entrance of the train station seem to be the same people in the pharmacy store... Are they from the Twelve World Centrum? They are badly injured but still alive. Their wounds were also tended. Are they your friends?

"If that is so, you really might not be a duoluo zhong." After Silvan said this casually, the elevator door opened slowly and he walked out of the elevator. Lin Sanjiu didn't read his expression because she was still stunned. She simply asked a question from her own speculations, instead, the man managed to infer so much about her based on that. Furthermore, he got everything right. The man's quick wit was certainly worthy of praise. She suddenly felt unsure about her plan to use the building to get rid of the team of men.

"Let's hope that it works." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. When she found herself in the familiar dim corridors, Lin Sanjiu felt that the events that happened to her in this place seemed to be a lifetime ago. When Lin Sanjiu recalled the scenes of her escape, she couldn't help looking at the man beside her. Silvan appeared as relaxed as before, as if he had just found another place to stroll around.

Thankfully, the building did not let her down.

They heard a sudden 'click' coming from the locked door of an apartment unit ahead. The door slowly swung open. From where they were standing, they could only see a few fingers at the edge of the door.

"Is Silvan's teammate behind that door, or—" Before Lin Sanjiu could finish her train of thoughts, Silvan threw the container which Lin Sanjiu was in aside. A black gun barrel appeared silently by his wrist. Next, Silvan aimed the line of blue flames from his gun at the door. The flames swallowed the door instantaneously.

"This is your chance!" Mrs. Manas shouted in Lin Sanjiu's mind. Lin Sanjiu who had already been prepared, did not waste a single second. She quickly activated and gathered all her higher consciousness together. She started compressing them as if her life depended on it.

While the torrent of flames continued engulfing the door, Lin Sanjiu was thrust into a pain she had never experienced in her life before. Usually, compressing two strands of higher consciousness was hard enough for her. Right now, she was trying to compress all her higher consciousness as much as possible. Even though she didn't have her physical body, she could not deny the bone-shattering pain she felt.

"Damn it. I'm giving up. I might not die even if I'm captured." Such thoughts surfaced in Lin Sanjiu's mind and it was very tempting to just give in to them. While enduring the vivid pain, Lin Sanjiu tried her best to curb her impulse to just give up. Though the vague encouragements from Mrs. Manas, a few words pierced through the haziness of her pain like the first light of dawn. "Do it now!" She heard those words very clearly.

If Silvan were to look at the cylindrical container at that point, he would have noticed that the weird creature in it was becoming smaller and smaller. It finally condensed itself to a size of an apple. In that condition, it glowed erratically as if in an unstable state. Suddenly, there was a loud explosion. The blue flames from his gun finally stopped as he turned around. At the same time, the container exploded into bits. The swelling black shadow from within shot out of the window like an arrow on a taut bow. It disappeared into the boundless sky.

"I didn't expect it to act so quickly," Silvan leaped up from the ground and stared at the broken fragments of the container. Her eyes revealed his slight amazement. "That is The Munition Factory's newest—oh, I forgot you are still here." He looked at the person who had just walked out from the door and threw his

thoughts about that weird thing to the back of his mind.

Chapter 223: You Have To Go To The Doctor If You're Sick

Lin Sanjiu flew straight back to the pharmacy store without even pausing for a breather. She nearly fell out of the sky when she reached it. She had spent only less than thirty minutes escaping from that team from The Munitions Factory, yet the small pharmacy store was now as crowded as the train station in China during the Lunar New Year's travel rush.

Almost admiring that scene, Lin Sanjiu slowly floated down from the sky. She was dumbstruck as she scanned the huge crowd around the store. She saw all sorts of spirits, those she recognized and many other familiar ones. They were all trying to squeeze their way into the pharmacy store. There was a spirit with the classic hair-covering-face appearance. She also saw a neatly-dressed, silver-haired granny with a faint smile. She spotted a translucent Kuchisake-onna with a scarf around her face and a mouth which stretched from ear to ear...

All spirits usually had a slightly translucent quality about them. However, there were so many spirits there that the multiple bodies and colors formed a generic black shadow of a huge crowd. It was really quite a sight. After she gave it some thought, Lin Sanjiu felt that no words, other than a good chain of vulgarities, could best describe her current feelings.

"If those kids die," Lin Sanjiu mumbled to herself as she pushed through the crowd of spirits, "I'm going to bomb that Munitions Factory. Even though her higher consciousness form looked a little similar to the other spirits, they were essentially different. Lin Sanjiu ground through the crowd like a diamond grinding through pieces of soda biscuits. After a few rounds, she had reduced the spirits, who were blocking her way to the entrance of the store, into columns of smoke. After pushing away the remaining

duoluozhongs that were in front of the entrance, Lin Sanjiu rushed into the store. Just as she let out a sigh of relief, she was stunned by the scene in front of her.

"No, you might get an infection. He lost too much blood. He needs stitches and a blood transfusion. Oh, since both of you have O blood type, transfusing your blood to him could be a possibility..."

Reno and Rena had both regained consciousness. Rena got out of the cupboard long ago and was now sitting by her brother's side. Though both kids appeared weak and lethargic because of their wounds, Lin Sanjiu could see that they were trying their best to focus on what the doctor was saying.

For that time being, she would call him... or it, a doctor.

There were all sorts of medical-related items on the floor, from a medical box to a stethoscope. There were even two medical records, one with Rena's name and the other with Reno's. However, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help scrutinizing the image in her mind.

Unmistakably, that doctor was a bicolor, black-white cat.

It clicked its tongue as it tapped the pen in its paws, "How about that? If you two consent to the procedure, I can arrange the surgery... Oh, what's wrong?"

Noticing the changes in the siblings' expression, the cat finally noticed that someone was behind him. He turned around and tossed a glance at Lin Sanjiu. Lin Sanjiu found herself staring into a cat's moist, shiny eyes, which shone with a green luster.

"Lin Sanjiu. You came back just in time. We are trying to plan our surgery with the doctor..." Rena said hurriedly before she turned to the cat and asked, "How long will the surgery take?"

The cat doctor did not answer. He gave Lin Sanjiu a sidelong glance and started packing his things. After he had stored all his

items, he straightened the bow tie on his neck, "You don't have to make your decision now. Take your time to think about it. Anyway, I work at the provincial hospital. When you guys have made a decision, you can just come over..."

Lin Sanjiu stared at the bicolor cat with her two pitch-black eye socket. Despite her gaze, the cat doctor seemed unfazed as he gave them an elegant nod and retreated out of the door in an unbelievable speed.

No matter what, he seemed very guilty.

When she looked at the siblings again, they still seemed bewildered as they started discussing quietly, "Right, I think what the doctor said made sense. Why don't we just go ahead with..."

"Go ahead with sh*t!" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help roaring inwardly. She pulled one of her rib bones out without hesitating and hit each of their heads' once.

"How can that be a real doctor?!" Lin Sanjiu wrote furiously while the kids watched in a daze, "That is a cat!" Though the cat did not look like other duoluo zhongs, Lin Sanjiu guessed that it was a character which belonged to some sort of supernatural story.

Who knows what would happen if they really let that cat perform surgery on them!

When the siblings suddenly realized their mistake, Lin Sanjiu quickly checked the siblings' condition. Other than a few strands of cat fur near Rena, Lin Sanjiu did not notice any other abnormalities. Only then did Lin Sanjiu feel a little less worried. Lin Sanjiu did not know how long it would take for that Munition Factory's team to get out of the building. She wasn't sure what the other members in the team would do but she knew that Silvan would definitely come to the pharmacy store to search for them. As they didn't have much time, Lin Sanjiu couldn't let the siblings rest more. She explained the situation hurriedly and urged the kids to leave the pharmacy store as quickly as they could.

"Cats sure are scary..." Reno remarked softly as he and his sister limped to the train station with each other's support.

"It was obviously both your stupidity." Lin Sanjiu couldn't help rolling her eyes in her mind.

Regardless of what the cat doctor was trying to do, he reminded her of one thing. The kids were badly injured. They probably couldn't recover on their own just based on their constitution. Despite feeling very uneasy, Lin Sanjiu took many antisceptic creams, bandages and antibiotics from the store. However, she had also decided that she would only use them as a last resort.

Just as before, once they entered the station, a train pulled into the station whistling within a few minutes. Almost as if aware of their presence, it stopped in front of Lin Sanjiu and the siblings. Attracted by the weakened siblings, there were many duoluozhongs on the train. However, after Lin Sanjiu aggressive clean-up, only a few duoluozhongs dared to peek at them from the neighboring carriages.

After finding some seats for the siblings to rest, Lin Sanjiu finally had the chance to tell them in detail about her encounter with the people from The Munitions Factory.

"No wonder you disappeared..." Rena sighed. "The Munition Factory has many combatants. When you see them in the Twelve World Centrum, they are always super arrogant... Oh, it is not because they have fantastic abilities. This is because any new products from The Munition Factory would always be given to their combatants first. They are very powerful, so not many people can escape from them. You must be quite powerful..."

Lin Sanjiu thought that Silvan must be an exception.

Surprisingly, Rena wasn't that worried, "Silvan? I've never heard of him before. But since they already said that they came here to capture duoluozhongs, I don't think they will trouble us if they don't find out you are Lin Sanjiu... In the past, I've heard people

saying that members from The Munition Factory would go to some of the high-level apocalyptic worlds to look for duoluo zhongs. They use them to develop biological weapons. I didn't expect those rumors to be true."

"Ah, so that explains it!" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help looking forward to seeing how developed the Twelve World Centrum were. Seeing her brother, who had fallen asleep, Rena also felt a little tired.

"Compared to the world outside, this train is safer... We get off the train when we recover..." as she said this, her voice gradually faded.

Chapter 224: Lin Sanjiu Is The Real Malicious Ghost

Lin Sanjiu didn't anticipate that they would stay on the train for almost a month after they settled down. As a matter of fact, since they could see duoluo zhongs, the train became the safest place for them. Due to its unique environment, it was also less likely that any sort of unexpected incident would occur. As such, under Lin Sanjiu's protection, the siblings converted one of the train carriages into their temporary living space and stayed on the train to recuperate.

After staying for such a long time on the train, Lin Sanjiu discovered that there was no end to the train journey. The map of the train route which was in the train carriage wasn't even reliable. Sometimes, the train would stop at the same station for more than ten times consecutively. Others appeared randomly after a few stops. On top of that, it was also impossible to figure how the direction of the train so they had no idea where the train was heading at any point in time.

The 'Kitty Provincial Hospital' station which they should have left behind long ago had already appeared five to six times. However, they had never seen that bicolor cat doctor again. Kisaragi Station and Bamboo Grove Mountains Station had also appeared twice. But most of the time, the train stopped at all sorts of stations with strange and bizarre names which were unfamiliar to them.

In this manner, Lin Sanjiu finally witnessed firsthand the difficulties of surviving in a B-Level world. In this one month, they had stopped at more than a hundred stations. However, during this time, they had only met slightly more than a dozen living people. They easily spotted the few newcomers to the world as they all had panicked expression and were obviously being

tortured by the environment. When those newcomers first saw the siblings, most of them would show their delight. They had almost the same reaction as when Lin Sanjiu met Douglas.

As they had Lin Sanjiu with them, the siblings only gave these people some pointers and did not form a team with them. Other than the few newcomers, the other people, without exception, were all from the Twelve Worlds Centrum. It was very easy to differentiate between the residents from the Twelve World Centrums and the people who were transported from other worlds. The people who came from the Twelve World Centrums were a lot more easy-going. They were also more well-prepared in terms of resources. Compared with survivors who came from other worlds, they did not request to join the siblings. Instead, after they exchanged information with the siblings, they would bid them farewell decisively.

"There are very little people here," Reno, who had almost fully recovered from his wounds, subsequently explained to Lin Sanjiu, "The proportion of posthumans here is actually quite normal. The higher the level of a world is, the higher the proportion of posthumans who are from the Twelve Worlds Centrum. That doesn't mean that survivors from other worlds don't get sent to high-level worlds as frequently... It is just that they die very quickly. Due to the difference in the combat requirements or protective equipment, it is difficult for a person from a C-level world to survive in a B-level world. A B-level world can be considered the start of another tier. When you go to a world B-level and above, survival isn't a matter of the number of duoluozhongs that exist in that world. Your abilities or luck must be at an outrageous level, otherwise, you will die without preparing yourself adequately beforehand."

"And that is why residence from the Twelve World Centrum have a greater chance of survival. They must have trained themselves beforehand and prepared all sort of battle equipment and

supplies." Lin Sanjiu nodded.

Rena was sitting beside them. When Rena's gaze inadvertently landed on Lin Sanjiu and saw the woman nodding her head, she instantly looked away. She quickly fixed her gaze at the dark skies outside the window. She didn't dare to look at Lin Sanjiu.

Recently, from acknowledging and treating Lin Sanjiu like a 'pet dog that they picked from the street', she now felt that Lin Sanjiu was a 'malicious ghost they picked from the street'.

"Come on, you haven't gotten used to it?" Reno chuckled as he showed a taunting face, "So, this is your weakness."

It wasn't really Rena's fault because Lin Sanjiu's recovery progress could be considered lightning fast over the past one month. Perhaps, that insane compression feat she attempted when she was caught by Silvan gave her a great boost. After that incident, she found that she had gotten a hang of her higher consciousness training. Not only did she generate a lot more higher consciousness, they also felt very much denser. She improved so much that instead of a grayish tint, the true color of her blood and skin was gradually coming back.

Yes. After her entire skeleton had been created, no one expected that her higher consciousness would start to sculpt Lin Sanjiu's every artery, vein, and flesh realistically.

The term flesh is just a generic term. Lin Sanjiu who was now sitting on a green seat already had some of the internal organs sculpted. Through her ribcage, one could see her heart and other organs. If it was just that, it wasn't that bad. However, recently, her higher consciousness had suddenly lost interest in developing her organs and started creating the muscles and tendons of half her body.

Thus, Lin Sanjiu now looked like a person who had been skinned. Half of her body revealed her bones and organs while the other half showed her muscles and tendons. If she walked on the streets

at night, she would probably scare little girls so much they would cry.

Not to mention Rena, not even Lin Sanjiu would look at her own reflection in the window if she could help it. On the other hand, Mrs. Manas was full of praise of Lin Sanjiu's current appearance.

"If you can successfully revive yourself after this ordeal, you wouldn't definitely feel a big difference!" After checking Lin Sanjiu's condition thoroughly, she couldn't help saying excitedly, "The muscles and organs created by your higher consciousness are way stronger than before. Sigh! I just want to see what a single punch from you looks like now..."

"What's the use?" Lin Sanjiu who was still unable to talk could only hold a smooth conversation with Mrs. Manas. "According to your method, my higher consciousness only acts as a sort of superglue. My final goal is to get back to my original body..."

Mrs. Manas seemed stumped by Lin Sanjiu's question. She hesitated and thought for a moment before she sputtered a few unclear words. Finally, she simply said, "Anyway, it will only do you good."

"That's right. I think you're still hiding a lot from me..." Lin Sanjiu suddenly remembered about that matter. She had just started the subject when her mindscape went silent. Mrs. Manas was playing dead once again. Lin Sanjiu certainly wasn't satisfied with letting Mrs. Manas avoid her questions. She wanted to press the teacher for more information when she heard Reno calling her, "Hey. Hey! What are you thinking!" He got her attention abruptly.

Lin Sanjiu looked up and saw Reno staring at her. From his looks, he had probably called her a few times. "Did you hear what I said? What are your thoughts about that?"

"What thoughts?" Lin Sanjiu froze for a moment. She was occupied by her thoughts just now, so she didn't hear the siblings' discussion. Amazingly, Reno could read Lin Sanjiu's expression

from the movement of her muscle tissues and mucous membranes. He frowned, "You weren't listening? We were discussing whether we should alig—."

Before he finished his sentence, the train braked suddenly. All of them fell forward from the inertia. The train made an ear-piercing screech before it came to a halt.

Chapter 225: The Person In The Tunnel

Ever since Lin Sanjiu boarded the train from Kisaragi Station, this was the first time she encountered such a situation. There was a stale silence around them. Lin Sanjiu could even hear the soft breathing sounds from the siblings very clearly. Occasionally, they would hear a 'pop' from the fluorescent lights above them. In such silence, that sound rang out like a thunderclap. From the train windows, they could see that it was very dark outside. They could also see a few indistinct white silhouettes. There wasn't a train station outside and there wasn't even any scenery to speak of. Actually, there wasn't even a glimmer of light outside. It was so dark that the light shining from the interior of the train was just swallowed by the darkness. Apparently, the train had suddenly stopped while it was traveling through a tunnel.

The three people looked at each other, feeling a little at a loss.

"This... We obviously haven't reached the next station, right?" Rena mumbled to herself as she stood up and looked at the train route map, feeling puzzled.

Even though the train route map changed constantly, one thing was fixed. The very next station that the train would stop would never change. Logically speaking, the train should actually stop at "Beluga Ocean Park Station".

"Have you ever heard of such a thing before?" Lin Snajiu wrote. As her body was now the color of raw flesh and organs, the words that she formed in the air were red and bloody. It was quite a terrifying sight.

"No," Reno answered hesitantly. "There isn't much information about Kisaragi Station. Collating the experiences from others who had been to this world, we created our strategy to survive here... No one ever mentioned that the train would stop suddenly."

"Collating the experiences from others who had been to this

world?" An image of the siblings surrounded by people immediately popped up in Lin Sanjiu's mind. A sudden thought flashed through her mind, "If they can mobilize resources, the Progressor Alliance must be very powerful?"

However, she told herself that it was not the time to think about that. Chasing away her wild thoughts, Lin Sanjiu stood up and looked around. Even though Rena was usually very afraid of Lin Sanjiu because of her appearance, when push came to shove, Rena would still follow her obediently. Rena reached out to a window and knocked on it. Seeing no reaction from anything outside the train, she asked, "Since we said we wanted to alight and the train stopped, maybe, we should get down now?"

Even though Rena said those words more or less to comfort herself, considering the situation at hand, they didn't seem to have any other choice.

"It is alright. We can basically see all the duoluozhongs in Kisaragi Station, so it won't be dangerous." Reno said to his sister encouragingly. However, nobody knew who he was actually trying to comfort.

When Lin Sanjiu heard their conversation, she couldn't help sighing. Even though the siblings' had recovered and were now wearing their backup clothes (the crumpled clothes that the siblings were now wearing had been squished in Reno's backpack all along), there was one thing they all knew in their hearts. When they were in the residential building, the siblings had already been badly corrupted by black matter.

Lin Sanjiu was killed when a duoluozhong ambushed her after she had been almost fully consumed by black matter. With her around to watch out for them, and the kids being able to see the spirits around, it was unlikely that they would be ambushed. However, she did not know what would happen if the kids risked walking around with their almost fully corrupted bodies. Neither did any of them know what to watch out for.

From the information that the siblings had gathered, no one mentioned about this point. Actually, it wasn't anything strange. If anything were to happen to a person who had been corrupted by black matter, they would most likely die. Naturally, they won't be able to return to Red Nautilus to provide this information.

"Both of you must be very careful," Lin Sanjiu wrote hurriedly as the siblings headed toward the door. The bloodied words which should be full of concern floated in midair. When Rena saw them, she couldn't help turning her head away.

"Got it," Reno said uncaringly, "If anyone dares to provoke me! Humph!"

Reno had just recovered from his wounds and still had scabs all over his body, but he had already started displaying his youthful overconfidence.

"It's nice to be young..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself as she stood aside while the siblings worked together to pry open the train door so that they could go out in a single file. The light from the train was just sufficient for them to see the train tracks and the walls of the tunnel. Wanting to pull her own weight, Lin Sanjiu went outside first. She cautiously circled the surroundings of the train twice. Noticing nothing unusual, she went back to the train to signal for the siblings.

The tunnel was very quiet and dark. As they looked toward the front of the train, they could see the light gradually fading into a deep darkness. Without the dim light from the windows of the train, they wouldn't even be able to see the first carriage of the train. They could see that the front lights of the train were not switched on, it was as if the train was now an empty shell.

"Which direction should we take?" Rena looked around anxiously. From the looks of it, it didn't matter which direction they chose. Using rock-paper-scissors, the siblings decided to head in the direction of the train's last carriage. "The train stopped not

long after we entered this tunnel. Considering that, we should be able to get out of this tunnel after we walk for a short distance!" Reno justified.

Ever since they came to this world, this was the first time that things had gone as expected. After they walked on the tracks for over ten minutes, the tunnel gradually became brighter. "What did I say!" Reno, who had been leading the team, exclaimed. When he saw the light from the end of the tunnel, he turned and shouted, "After we get out of here, we can go wherever we want!"

Rena was most annoyed by her brother's cockiness. She answered him half-heartedly and picked up her pace. "Come on! Move faster! It is so dark here..." Rena called out to Lin Sanjiu who was at the back of their team.

However, Lin Sanjiu suddenly stopped. Lin Sanjiu could control the scanning range of her higher consciousness. At max, her scanning range was a few kilometers wide, and she could shrink it down to about the radius of ten meters. Naturally, Lin Sanjiu could see the areas that the siblings couldn't clearly in her mind. Lin Sanjiu watched the image in her mind again. When she confirmed that she didn't make a mistake, she grabbed a rock and threw it at the train track.

A bright, loud sound resonated through the tunnel. The siblings immediately stopped as they turned behind cautiously. When they saw Lin Sanjiu holding another rock, they were relieved but they couldn't help feeling somewhat confused.

"Why are you stopping?" Rena asked. With half her body made of muscles and half of organs, Lin Sanjiu pointed her red arm straight ahead and wrote a line of words, "There is someone there."

Chapter 226: That Fella

Reno and Rena turned behind and looked doubtfully at the dim light from the end of the tunnel, in the direction that Lin Sanjiu had pointed.

"Someone? But, I don't see anyone..." Though Rena said that, she had already worn her gloves and was gripping her two fists tightly in front of her while she stretched her neck to look as far as she could. Similarly, Reno switched between looking at Lin Sanjiu and ahead of them. Once they stopped, the tunnel fell into a still silence once more. They couldn't even hear a breeze. It really seemed as though there wasn't anyone hiding in the darkness.

The spot that Lin Sanjiu pointed to was actually 600 meters away from them. Furthermore, the few people weren't moving as they were intentionally hiding their presence so it was hard for Reno and Rena to detect them. However, this was too troublesome to explain. After she thought for a while, she quickly wrote, "You guys can shout. Who's there."

Reno acted immediately, once he read Lin Sanjiu's words, he raised his voice and yelled, "Who's there? Why are you acting sneakily! You better come out now!" The teenager's loud voice with a slightly threatening tone reverberated through the tunnel for some time. However, after he shouted a few times and the echoes in the tunnel faded, the people hiding ahead did not respond.

"Bro, if they don't want to come, let's just do it!" A young girl's voice immediate followed, "Don't you still have a few of your Ripple Spheres?"

Her words were effective. Once Rena said the words 'Ripple Sphere', they immediately heard a few distant, vague shouts coming from a distance. As the people were too far from them, they couldn't really make out what was said, except something like 'wait'. Reno and Rena held their breaths as straightened their

backs, hiding Lin Sanjiu, who was behind them, from view. They watched cautiously as three black figures emerge from the faint light at the end of the tunnel and slowly walked towards them.

The black figures grew larger until they were some distance away from Lin Sanjiu and the siblings. Both parties were now visible to each other. The strangers stopped, keeping a safe distance between themselves and the siblings, somehow showing some etiquette.

Reno and Rena blocked Lin Sanjiu from view, so she simply sat on the train tracks and peeked from behind them through the gap between the siblings. From a single glance, Lin Sanjiu could tell that the three people were definitely from the Twelve Worlds Centrum. People who struggle desperately to survive from other apocalyptic worlds certainly didn't have the mood to dress that well.

The tall woman that Lin Sanjiu saw wore a glossy red deep red lipstick on her plump moist lips. It seemed well-applied and fresh. The woman, with quite a good figure, in those high heel leather boots, probably reapplied her makeup often. Standing beside a little person (LP), accentuated her height.

The LP man was short and tubby. He was wearing a small tailcoat. Despite his dwarfish proportions, he had a cheerful, amiable face that was hard to hate. When Lin Sanjiu looked at him, he blinked his eyes, which seemed too large for his face, and introduced his party with a friendly smile, "I'm Derik. This is Miss Hannie Huang. That is brother Zhu Mingchun."

The man called Zhu Mingchun had a very average appearance. There was nothing notable about it except for the muscular frame and his dull expression. His eyes had not blinked since the two parties met.

Before the siblings could react, Derik gave a modest and gentle bow. Then, he apologized to the siblings, "We heard some sounds from the tunnel just now. Not knowing if you guys were friends or

foes, we hid. Truth be told, we made some enemies in this world so we really have to be careful. That was why when you guys tried to call us out, we hesitated..."

Derik seemed to be tasked with representing his team.

Even though he sounded reasonable, the siblings couldn't help feeling suspicious of their previous actions. The siblings might be young and energetic, but they were not so naive that they would trust these people so easily.

Reno raised his chin and replied cautiously, "Why were you guys hiding?"

"Sigh. Since both of you are from Twelve Worlds Centrum, I will tell you the truth." Though Derik looked unsophisticated, he sounded very cultured. Even though he was speaking to the two minors, he spoke politely to them, "We got information that an item we wanted could be found in this place. Our enemies who are looking for the same item also got the news. To avoid being ambushed by our enemies, we had to be vigilant..."

Once he said that, the tall woman called Hannie Huang opened her mouth and spoke in a brash manner, "You guys have Ripple Spheres? State your price. We need some right now." Lin Sanjiu immediately understood why Derik had to be the spokesperson for their team.

The explosives which Reno used to blast the building were called Ripple Spheres. Since he had thrown a chain of those explosives, Lin Sanjiu did not know if he still had any. Reno gave Hannie a sidelong glance and folded his arms, "We're not selling."

Derik quickly mediated the situation, "Miss Huang, you're too rash... We are all from Twelve Worlds Centrum, so we sort of share a similar hometown. I wonder where you two might be heading?"

Even though Derik maintained the same decorum, Reno and

Rena could easily sense that 'I hope you two leave quickly' vibe from the man. The situation suddenly got awkward. It wasn't as if the siblings didn't want to leave but they couldn't move now. If they moved, Lin Sanjiu would be seen. Just when the two kids exchanged hesitant glances at each other, Lin Sanjiu simply stood up and walked out from behind them.

Seeing a horrifying 'creature' emerging from the darkness, the man called Zhu Mingchun was alarmed. While the other two people beside him gasped softly, he was the first to react. With a yell, he leaped forward. From the looks of it, he was also a fighter-type combatant. Zhu Mingchun's movements were very quick. In just a split second, like a fleeting shadow, he bypassed the siblings and aimed his kick at Lin Sanjiu before the siblings could even react.

However, Lin Sanjiu, who was well-versed in physical fighting herself, didn't think much of his attack. How could the agility of a physical body compare to her higher consciousness form? In her current form, all movements created from any physical body seemed somewhat sluggish to her. With a slight jump, she avoided the man's kick. As she fell, she condensed the higher consciousness of her leg bones, making them tangible. Then, she landed a kick on the man's knee. Zhu Mingchun immediately let out a painful cry.

At the same time, Reno and Rena finally reacted to the situation. As Rena stepped forward to block Zhu Mingchun, Reno said angrily, "What are you trying to do with our teammate?"

The three people in front of them were shocked. Derik and Hannie exchanged glances before Derik stammered, "Isn't that... Isn't that a duoluo zhong? How could..."

It really wasn't all that surprising how Lin Sanjiu was misidentified. The whole incident was not a big deal, but Lin Sanjiu could shake off the feeling that the Hannie woman had been trying to size her up. This wasn't unusual since 'something' like Lin Sanjiu was a rare sight. However, Hannie seemed to be

concentrating on only one part of Lin Sanjiu. As Lin Sanjiu facing the three people directly, she spotted when Hannie took two steps to the side and tilted her head... as if trying to see Lin Sanjiu's back.

To be honest, Lin Sanjiu's back only consisted of two kidneys and some mucous membrane, there wasn't really anything interesting about it. Suspicious, Lin Sanjiu shifted her position. As Hannie didn't want to appear too conspicuous, she had no choice but to give up on seeing Lin Sanjiu's back.

"Oh, is that so? What a rare ability!" Derik did not doubt the siblings' words, "But, it is easy to make such faux pas in a place like Kisaragi Station. It pays to be careful..." After his superficial comment, Derik hesitated for a moment before he said almost apologetically, "I think you guys and that fella must be quite powerful," he pointed at Lin Sanjiu. It was probably inconceivable to him that a woman would end up looking like that. "Since you got the upper hand fighting against Brother Zhu, may I be so bold to ask a favor..."

"Could I invite you three to join in our operations to fight against our enemies? They have more men and are more well-equipped..." Derik clenched his teeth for a second, "We heard that there is quite a number of Special Items around here. With only the three of us, we can't get all of them. Once everything is settled, we can give you 30% of the stash."

Chapter 227: A Woman Must Protect Her Waist

The sound of footsteps on the train tracks broke the silence in the dark tunnel. The vague noises of human chatter gradually grew clearer as the footsteps headed in the direction of the exit.

"It's a self-driving train after all. It isn't really that weird if it stops suddenly. Maybe, there is a fault..." The most distinct voice from the chatter was one that was low and mellow. After that person spoke, he laughed, "But, luckily that train broke down, otherwise we wouldn't have helpers!"

Just as that sentence was spoken, the group of people finally walked out from the tunnel. The person leading the group was a LP wearing a tailcoat. He raised his arm and pointed to the street, not far from them, and gave a thoughtful explanation to the teenage siblings and the reddish humanoid, "This area was once a financial district so there are many banks here. We chose this place as a strategic base because it is easy to defend..."

The person who spoke was Derik. Naturally, the people he was talking to were Reno, Rena and Lin Sanjiu. Initially, the three of them didn't want to participate in the complicated mess. However, Derik didn't give up and continued to persuade them earnestly. He also raised his proposal to a 50:50 split, instead of the 70:30 he initially offered. With his pleasant attitude and charming way of speaking, he made it difficult for them to reject him.

With three other people observing them, Lin Sanjiu couldn't even communicate in written words to the siblings even if she wanted to. The siblings looked at each other and Rena finally spoke, "We don't wish to be dragged into your conflicts, so—"

"What about this?" Derik interjected, "As we don't have enough people, even guarding this place is quite troublesome. Since you guys don't want to get involved, why don't you help as just guards

in this place? We will still split 30% of what we get with you!"

He was very tactful in his negotiation. He started with a difficult request for them to join them in battle, before he reduced the request to something simpler like guarding the premise. He even offered a good reward, so it was really hard for them to reject him. Just as Lin Sanjiu sighed, Reno acted as she expected. He paused to think for some time and agreed, "I think that's alright."

Derik immediately showed his great satisfaction at the outcome. He quickly took lead and brought the siblings and Lin Sanjiu out of the tunnel. The infrastructure in Kisaragi Station was very strange, so when they came out of the tunnel, they found themselves right in the financial district.

"Who did you guys offend? How did it happen?" Rena asked Derik while she walked beside her brother. She had not removed her gloves from the moment her group met the other trio and instead kept her hands in the pockets of her Tully dress.

Hannie answered her instead, "You guys are from Red Nautilus so you probably have never heard of them. Our enemies are a group who have recently gained infamy in Jade Paradise. They are ruthless and arrogant. They are a group of seven people. Every now and then, they would create trouble for us."

With her explanation, it was obvious to the siblings and Lin Sanjiu why they were so desperate to find people to help them. The difference in the number of members was too large. Rena quietly explained to Lin Sanjiu that Jade Paradise was one of the worlds in Twelve Worlds Centrum.

"We purchased a very expensive detector from The Munitions Factory and detected the existence of Special Items around this area... As you know, it takes a long time to actually find a Special Item even after detection... Sigh. We can only blame ourselves for not being more careful. And so, we were targeted by that group from Jade Paradise," Derik sighed quite a few times, seeming to

regret the matter.

"How many flashing dots did you see on your detector?" Reno couldn't help asking.

Hearing this, Derik smiled faintly and whispered, "Exactly 27."

Reno and Rena both took a sharp breath when they heard this. It was extremely difficult to manufacture a Special Item Detector. So, even if it was created by The Munitions Factory, it was flawed. Special Items detected by the detector were indicated by small flashing dots on its screen, as the false-positive rate was high, it had an error rate of 30%.

However, the number of Special Items indicated was quite extraordinary, even if they took account of the error rate.

"That many? That explains why those people targeted you guys." Reno mumbled.

"They made it very clear that they wanted everything, declaring that they would not spare anyone who got in their way. We have a difficult battle ahead of us..." Derik sighed and brought the group of them to a bank building situated among a few other office buildings.

Compared to the other business buildings, a bank has better security features and a stronger structure. It also has windows with bulletproof glass. In other words, a bank is an ideal place to defend against attackers.

"We were lucky. We found the key of this bank on a duoluo zhong nearby so we didn't have to destroy any part of its structure," Derik explained when Hannie took out a remote control key. The metal shutters of the bank rolled upward slowly, revealing thick glass doors. They could see their reflection on the cold large marble floors.

After calling the siblings to enter, Derik and his team walked into the bank like it was their house.

"Hey, let's not mingle with them for too long," Rena said quietly to her brother and Lin Sanjiu when they walked through the doors of the bank, "It sounds dangerous. We don't even have anything to do with it, so why should we take this risk..."

"But... There are 27 Special items here," Reno was a little hesitant, "We have already used up quite a lot of the items we brought..."

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help thinking of the cylindrical container she was trapped in previously.

" Sometimes, a powerful Special Item was game-changing. If I still had to stay in Kisaragi Station for such a long time, it wouldn't be a bad idea to collect a few more Special Items, " Lin Sanjiu thought to herself absent-mindedly while she followed the siblings into the bank.

The front lobby of the bank seemed wide and empty as everything that could be moved had been cleared from the middle of the lobby. There were a few random documents on the ground and the seats meant for waiting customers were strewn haphazardly to one side. There was still a stack of cash on the table previously used for form-filling.

After showing Reno and Rena their base of operation, Derik took out a hand-drawn map when they weren't noticing. Even though the drawings on the map looked simple and crude, the map was detailed. Every street and corner had been carefully drawn. From the path that they took from the tunnel, it was clear that the map was very accurate.

After all, the opposing party had more members, came from Twelve Worlds Centrum, and most certainly had many rare items, so they had to be extremely cautious. After everyone had sat in a circle around the map, Derik circled the area where they had a skirmish with their enemies. He briefed the team about what had happened and his analysis.

"And, that's about it. Do you have questions?" When Derik had almost finished the briefing, he looked at the team and asked.

Reno and Rena shook their heads. Hannie and Zhu Mingchun also started to stand up.

Zhu Mingchun shot a very quick glance at Rena's lower back. He looked for just a split second before looking away and acted like nothing had happened. Though it was just a swift look, Lin Sanjiu noticed it.

Chapter 228: An Unexpected Discovery

Daytime only lasted for a short while before nightfall silently arrived. The last rays of the sun lingered in the dark murky sky as if unwilling to depart. Finally, reaching a consensus, the sky turned into a dark deep blue, such that the clouds appeared blue. The wind swept gently through the silent cities devoid of human life. The sound of the breeze ironically accentuated the silence all around.

The group stood on the rooftop of the bank building and looked at the dots of yellow light in the distance. Those light seemed like the only sign of anything living within the lifeless darkness. Though Kisaragi Station was a recently formed world, the sides of the bank building were already overrun with ivy.

"Those lights are probably switched on by duoluozhongs to attract survivors," Hannie suddenly commented, as though she had noticed Lin Sanjiu looking in the direction of the lights. Lin Sanjiu was startled by the woman's keen observation.

Even though their agreement was for Reno and Rena to guard to place, Derik's group probably didn't trust them enough. Consequently, Derik sent Hannie to patrol the place with Lin Sanjiu.

After they ate dinner, Hannie's lips were once again a bright red. She had done some touch-up when nobody noticed. Whenever she walked, her high-heeled leather boots made loud clackity sounds which could be heard from afar. However, it didn't seem like a concern for Hannie. She wore her boots proudly without showing any signs of changing her footwear any time soon.

Her acute sense of observation mismatched her straightforward personality.

After observing for some time that the western streets were quiet, the two women turned and headed toward another side of

the building.

"Your ability is quite strange," Hannie couldn't help commenting after a long time of silence between them. "Is it for scaring others?"

Lin Sanjiu shot a glance at Hannie and shook her head. As she moved, the neck muscles pulsed and contracted. It was a rather gruesome sight to behold, so Hannie quickly looked away. Lin Sanjiu did not communicate by written in front of Derik and the others just to keep a hidden ace with her.

From Hannie's perspective, it was better to patrol the place with a mute than a hideous, incomplete anatomy figure. Hannie scoffed and ignored Lin Sanjiu, walking away noisily. Lin Sanjiu couldn't fathom how that woman could survive in an apocalyptic world.

"Perhaps, this was an affordance only residents of Twelve Worlds Centrum have?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. Even though Hannie was constantly on standby, her makeup was perfect and her soft wavy hair was always kempt. She wore a high-collared, wine-colored sleeveless blouse and a pair of skintight shorts. Her outfit accentuated her beautiful figure but it was hard to imagine that she could fight in it.

"Maybe she can activate her ability from afar?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help guessing.

Their surroundings were so quiet that it was almost peaceful. Lin Sanjiu and Hannie's patrol was actually the second shift. When Reno and Derik patrolled earlier, they also didn't notice anything out of place.

Being vigilant, Lin Sanjiu kept the scanning area of her higher consciousness within the radius of 600 meters. After a few hours, she didn't discover any threats but instead used up quite a lot of her higher consciousness. Her left calf muscles shrunk quite a bit. After a quick consideration, Lin Sanjiu reduced her scanning radius to 200 meters.

"I can't believe this. I still have to patrol this place with 'it' for another two hours..." Hannie mumbled softly to herself some distance away from Lin Sanjiu, though Lin Sanjiu could capture what she said clearly.

Lin Sanjiu was not bothered by such complaints and instead she stretched her neck and looked around her. Even though her current body was just made of higher consciousness, Lin Sanjiu valued the regained sensation from stretching her muscles that she had lost for some time. When she had the chance, she would move her neck.

When Lin Sanjiu turned back to look at Hannie again, a sudden gust of wind blew Hannie's wavy hair in the opposite direction.

"A breeze?" Just as Lin Sanjiu had that thought and before she could react properly, she suddenly sensed that something was wrong. Moving solely on her intuition, Lin Sanjiu floated backward. A gust of wind brushed the tip of her nasal bone.

It had become windy, but the wind was created by a ball-like thing flying toward them in mid-air. That ball-like thing looked similar to a cannonball. It appeared to have been shot from the rooftop of another high-rise building. It whistled in the air as it whizzed toward Lin Sanjiu and Hannie. It was accelerating at such a high speed that it stirred up a piercing wind.

"It's an enemy attack!" Hannie immediately shouted into her communicator while she climbed up from the ground in a slightly embarrassing manner. At the same time, the ball-like thing had already reached the edge of the rooftop they were standing on. It suddenly unfolded, exposing a person who was smiling with its tongue stuck out. The person gripped the edge of the rooftop, did a flip, and landed on the rooftop. That "cannonball" had transformed into a shirtless man with dark-colored skin.

Lin Sanjiu was slightly startled. She did not know where the other six members were hiding. She only knew that the man in

front of them wasn't going to be someone easy to deal with. Under such circumstances, it was quite impossible to get out of this situation by stating that she was just on "guard duty". In a quick decisive manner, she lowered her body and launched herself toward the man.

"Ah, what is this!" the dark-skinned man was stunned for a split second before he avoided Lin Sanjiu's attack. He stuck out his long tongue and licked his own cheek. He cast a sweeping glance at Lin Sanjiu's lower back and his expression changed instantly. With a few somersaults, he evaded Lin Sanjiu and blocked Hannie's path.

"I don't want to fight with you!" the man shouted to Lin Sanjiu. Lin Sanjiu stopped. Then, he turned to Hannie and chuckled, "You're my target!"

"You're overestimating yourself!" Hannie yelled. A ball of white light appeared in her hand as she briskly aimed at the man's face. Much to Lin Sanjiu's surprise, Hannie had a melee close-combat style. Lin Sanjiu decidedly restrained herself from helping.

This was a rare opportunity for Lin Sanjiu to observe Hannie and her real capabilities. After watching her for a while, Lin Sanjiu realized that Hannie definitely had some level of combat skills. After exchanging a few blows, Hannie had the upper hand and forced the man toward the rooftop access door. Meanwhile, the sound of footsteps came from the stairs. Derik and the others came to help and they now had the dark-skinned man trapped.

The dark-skinned man uttered an indiscernible curse and nimbly crouched and rolled away from Hannie's attack. Following which, he rushed to the edge of the rooftop without even taking a gasp of air. When Zhu Mingchuan pushed open the rooftop access door violently, the man had already jumped off the building with no qualms.

Zhu Mingchuan and Hannie immediately rushed to the edge of the rooftop. However, without any abilities to jump off a high-rise

building unscathed, the two of them could only look down from above and mutter vulgarities. Apparently, the man had escaped by air.

"How are you? Are you hurt?" Reno and Rena, who had been behind Derik, asked worriedly as they ran toward Lin Sanjiu. They were late and missed that brief battle. Rena looked away hurriedly and asked, "What just happened?"

Lin Sanjiu did not reply.

Derik and the others were standing nearby, so Lin Sanjiu didn't want to write a reply.

When the dark-skinned man jumped off the building, Lin Sanjiu clearly saw a "7" on his back.

Chapter 229: Long-brewed Plan

"Take off your clothes."

The one single light source in an office inside a bank came from a table lamp. The light barely pierced through the darkness. The yellow light covered a small radius before being swallowed by the darkness. The "person" standing in the shadows wrote these bloodied words. After that, she moved the lamp so that the light made her words visible.

"But, I'm only fifteen..." a teenage boy said with opened jaws. He was very hesitant and seemed very reluctant, as if considering something. For a moment, Lin Sanjiu didn't know whether to laugh or cry as she wrote frustratedly, "What are you thinking! Just take off your shirt!"

They only had a short break between patrols, so Lin Sanjiu took considerable effort to get the three of them together. She certainly didn't want Reno to waste their time so aimlessly.

"Huh? Okay..." Reno scratched his head and looked at her sister beside him for a second. Then, he rolled his shirt up and took it off. The adolescent was still growing and had a lean frame. However, with his years of training, he didn't look scrawny but instead had a trim body. Lin Sanjiu did not notice this at all because her mind was focused on one thing. "Turn your body."

Reno listened obediently and showed his back. Out of curiosity, Rena moved closer to have a look. Just when she saw Reno's back, she let out a quiet yelp, "Huh? What's this?"

Under the yellow light from the lamp, they could clearly see a small black "4" between the dimples of his back.

"What? What's on my body?" Reno started getting a little anxious.

At the same time, Rena caught a glimpse of what Lin Sanjiu

wrote and suddenly became anxious as well. Before she could reply to Reno, Rena pulled up her dress and quickly said to her brother, "Is there also a number on my back?"

There was, without a doubt, a small numeral "4" on the teenage girl's youthful skin.

"How... how did we get this number?" Reno saw it and turned to see the floating words above Lin Sanjiu's hand: "Both of you have it."

"There is a 4 on your back. Do I also have that? Weird, I didn't feel anything..." Reno said as he touched the "4" on his sister's back.

Rena, who had been trying to look at her own back, immediately replied, "Are you touching the number? It doesn't feel any different."

The number had appeared on their back without them noticing at all. It did not feel any different from their skin. It was as if they suddenly had a birthmark which looked like a number. After the siblings got over their initial shock, they started discussing about what that number was. They had only exchanged a few words when they realized that Lin Sanjiu was quiet. They couldn't help turning to look at Lin Sanjiu.

Right now, Lin Sanjiu felt somewhat pensive about this. There wasn't any skin or muscle on her back right now. She only had her spine and the two red organs beside. Naturally, the others couldn't spot a small black number. However, with Mrs. Manas reminder, she used her higher consciousness to check her entire body and finally found something out of place.

She noticed a bit of black color near where her lower back should be. When she looked closer, she spotted a small "4". It had appeared within her higher consciousness at some unknown time without any sign at all.

If it was only something on their skins, it might not be too serious. However, if that number could appear as part of her higher consciousness... For a moment, Lin Sanjiu was too deep in thought to hear the siblings calling her.

"Hey, what are you thinking about?" Reno walked over and acted like he was going to push her. Lin Sanjiu snapped out of her thoughts. "How did you know that there were numbers on our body?"

Lin Sanjiu smiled a little bitterly in her mind, "Not only you two. I have it as well." Lin Sanjiu wrote. "That man who attacked us also had a number 7 on his back. If I'm correct, Derik and his teammates probably have numbers on their back as well. I think they know about these numbers... but I don't know what numbers are on their back."

"Does it appear on anyone that had been corroded by black matter?" Rena said as she couldn't help touching her back for a second.

Unlike his sister, Reno had a different concern, "What made you think that way?"

"I have noticed them looking at our backs a few times," Lin Sanjiu wrote honestly. "At first, I didn't know what they were doing... Until I saw the man at the rooftop today."

The siblings were quiet for a short while.

"If Derik and the others know about this number, why didn't they tell us?" Reno asked quietly. Perhaps, being his age, Reno was disappointed to find out about this as he had a good impression on Derik.

Lin Sanjiu also thought of another suspicious point. The bank building had a few dozen floors but they only patrolled the first floor and the rooftop. Before she met the dark-skinned man, that strategy seemed quite logical. However, if Derik's team knew that

their enemy could attack from the air, such arrangement was quite meaningless because their enemy could attack from any floor!

"Isn't it obvious enough. They must have other plans."

Before Lin Sanjiu could write another word, Rena replied, "I wonder how the numbers are related to the Special Items... I think we shouldn't work with them any longer. Let's just ask them about this number and leave!"

It was easy for Rena to say 'just ask them' but it might mean a confrontation. But all three of them were not people who would avoid conflicts. They discussed softly for some time and quickly decided on what to do.

"Hannie is wearing a very short blouse. Rena, you will pretend that you accidentally spotted a number on her back later and try to test her. Let's see what's their reaction." Reno organized their plan, "It is best if they tell us the truth... If they try to tell us more lies, we will pretend like we believe them to keep them off guard. Next, when we change shifts, Lin Sanjiu and I would hide somewhere to ambush them. If we see an opportunity, we will catch that Zhu Mingchun. I don't believe I can't get anything out from him!"

This plan was certainly more reliable than confronting them straight up. After they decided on this, and seeing that it was about time, they tried their best to relax their expressions. They headed for the door.

Reno, who was leading, heard a sudden light 'click' before he even reached for the door handle. The noise was very soft and faded before they could even confirm it. If they were as tensed as they were now, they could have missed it.

Lin Sanjiu found the sound very familiar. She frowned and thought for a while. "Damn it," she thought to herself inwardly. That was the sound of Hannie's boots.

Chapter 230: The So-called Cognitive Blind Spot

"So that's why! This was the purpose of wearing such noisy boots and acting like she didn't care. Hannie used it to create a misimpression. She could actually move around without making a sound!" Mrs. Manas exclaimed.

When a person is used to a sound, it would create a sort of associative biases, making it impossible to consider the possibility that she could move soundlessly. In other words, it created a cognitive blind spot.

Lin Sanjiu was shocked by what Mrs. Manas said and quietly regretted letting her guard down for a moment. She should have kept her higher consciousness scanning at a wider range. Being too anxious to recover her body, she had become overly frugal with using her higher consciousness.

After that sound disappeared, Reno rushed over and grabbed the door handle. He pushed down the handle and shook the door violently. Unfortunately, much to the siblings' chagrin as their faces turned pale, the door would not open despite the door creaking from Reno's strength. They had been locked in.

Logically, a normal man-made office door should not be this strong. The siblings squinted and peeped through the crack of the door before finally stopping and dropping their heads, disheartened.

"It's no use. They must have used some item manufactured in Twelve Worlds Centrum," Rena sighed and turned to Lin Sanjiu. She found the words Lin Sanjiu had created in mid-air, "Hannie is outside? How did you know? Let me see... Hey, can you go out?"

Rena's face lit up when she remembered this. "That's right! How could I've forgotten that! You can go out!" Rena's voice rose with

excitement. Even though the gap between the door was very narrow and Lin Sanjiu's body had grown significantly, Lin Sanjiu could slowly squeeze through that gap and escape from the room as long as she stretched and flattened herself.

"Great! Go outside and remove that item from the door!" Reno said urgently.

Without making any sound, Lin Sanjiu lowered her body. Her white bones, muscles, and blood gradually fused together and she stretched herself out. She was now a gruesome color, as if someone had mashed a person's body and put it in a mixer. Rena averted her gaze as she was too afraid to look at Lin Sanjiu. She could only hear her brother cheering Lin Sanjiu, "Yes, you're halfway. You're out!"

Rena quickly looked and saw the last bit of reddish splodge disappearing through the gap under the door. Lin Sanjiu had disappeared from the room. She took 40 seconds to slip out from under the door. To a normal person, that isn't much time. However, 40 seconds was enough to climb one floor, so it felt like an unusually long time to Lin Sanjiu.

Once Lin Sanjiu relaxed, her body immediately reverted back to original form with a half side made of muscles and the other half of organs. She examined the weird thing on the door. Before she came out of the room, Lin Sanjiu would never have imagined that the thing reinforcing the door would actually be alive.

A black scorpion about the size of a little girl's upper body was on the door. It had pierced its two long pincers into the door frame. A dull light shone off its black, patterned exoskeleton. As incredulous as it sounded, Lin Sanjiu could sense the scorpion's "muscles".

Lin Sanjiu carefully avoided the poisonous stinger on the scorpion's waving tail and grabbed its body. She exerted her strength before it could react with its stinger. However, she was shocked that she couldn't pull that scorpion off even with her current strength. The scorpion did not budge even an inch.

Unwilling to give up, she tried it a couple more times but found that it was still stuck to the door. Lin Sanjiu was starting to get anxious.

Apparently, Hannie had overheard their plans using some method and decided to seal the door with this scorpion. Lin Sanjiu didn't know when Hannie would bring the others over. Lin Sanjiu knew she needed to get the siblings out before they became easy targets for them.

"How is it?" Rena asked impatiently from behind the door, "You can't open it?"

Lin Sanjiu thought for a moment and knocked once on the door to reply to Rena.

As the office they were in was on the top floor, it was too high for them to jump out of the window even if they wanted to escape that way. Just when Reno and Rena were discussing what to do next, Lin Sanjiu suddenly had an idea.

"Wait for me," Lin Sanjiu wrote after squeezing part of her body through the gap under the door. Then, with some difficulty, she added, "I will chase Han—."

Naturally, she was referring to Hannie. In fact, it had only been two minutes since they heard the sound from Hannie's boots. If Derik and Zhu Mingchun were on the first floor, it was possible that Hannie had not reached them.

" If I can catch that woman, getting information from her and dealing with the locked door wouldn't be a problem , " Lin Sanjiu's heart pounded. Before the two children could respond, she flew toward stairs heading down.

Even though a large part of her body was already completed, it was still just a body made of higher consciousness. In front of others, she tried to maintain the illusion that she was walking with her feet. However, Lin Sanjiu could easily lift her legs and make

her entire body float like before.

Considering that she could fly, Lin Sanjiu thought that she should probably be faster than Hannie. With this in mind, Lin Sanjiu used her maximum speed and flew down ten floors before rushing into the stairway. She flew down the stairways floor by floor but she couldn't catch a single glimpse of Hannie. When she finally saw the ground floor, she found that was totally quiet and there was no one around. Lin Sanjiu didn't see Derik or Zhu Mingchun around, let alone Hannie.

"This is weird. They were here previously..." Lin Sanjiu circled the lobby of the bank anxiously. She tried to retrace her steps and wondered if she made a mistake. When she moved to the corridor, she wanted to slap herself. The elevator display showed that the elevator was current on the top floor (which was where the siblings were). Lin Sanjiu had no idea how long it had already been there.

"They took the elevator up!" Shocked, Lin Sanjiu didn't even have the time to rebuke herself for her stupidity. Lin Sanjiu rushed out of the building and flew upward immediately. "I hope the kids are okay..."

Before Lin Sanjiu even muttered these words in her heart, she was badly startled by a loud boom from above. The top floor exploded with flames. The blast was so strong that the force swept Lin Sanjiu for a distance. At the same time, shattered glass and broken window frames fell from the air like rain.

Amidst the destruction and debris, two people were also falling down like ragdolls.

Chapter 231: Breathless

Just as Lin Sanjiu felt her heart sinking as heavily as the two figures which had fallen out from the window above, the two people suddenly moved. They stretched out their limbs, as if trying to catch any sort of dangling lifeline. Lin Sanjiu was relieved as she quickly flew over to help them.

Lin Sanjiu figured that they must have been affected by the blast so they were incapacitated for a moment. She stretched out her body and accelerated toward the two people, hoping to create a net with her body to catch both of them.

As Lin Sanjiu got closer, she got a better view of their faces. Even though Rena's face was black with soot, Lin Sanjiu could still see the girl's frightened expression. Rena's mouth was opened as if she wanted to make a sound, but her voice was stuck in her throat. "Ahhhhhhh!" On the other hand, Reno was screaming loudly as he was flung far from the building because of the blast. His voice resonated through the building, echoing through each floor.

"As long as they are okay, we can teach Derik and his gang a lesson later!" Mrs. Manas said to Lin Sanjiu, with a calmer voice.

Judging from the positions of both children, it was impossible for Lin Sanjiu to catch both of them. Lin Sanjiu give it a quick thought and decisively flew under Rena, as she was closer to her. As Reno flew out from the building a little later than Rena, his position was a little higher and had a few more seconds before reaching the ground.

When Lin Sanjiu reached for Rena with her skinless arm made of blood-red muscles, Rena was not afraid at all. In fact, Rena had never noticed that Lin Sanjiu was so cute. When she finally felt that she wasn't falling as quickly, she burst into tears, "I was so scared!"

Carrying an additional weight, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help being

dragged down a little. Thankfully, her current state was far superior to when they were at that demonic building. Once she secured Rena, she rushed upward once again.

Reno continued screaming as he fell but, knowing that Lin Sanjiu was nearby, he couldn't help feeling relieved. For a second, his expression was just very weird. He didn't appear to be hurt badly. Just when Lin Sanjiu was at ease, she sensed a gust of wind from the back of her neck.

Normally, with the movement of air caused by the blast, she should not have noticed that bit of disturbance in the airflow. Yet, she felt it without any real reason, and it seemed familiar to her.

"Behind you!" Mrs. Manas shouted, Lin Sanjiu's scanning radius immediately expanded and her higher consciousness speedily create an image of what was behind her in her mind. A dark brown ball was flying directly toward Reno with a sharp whistling sound. Suddenly, there was a strong draft and the ball reached Reno before Lin Sanjiu.

When the ball unfolded and showed an arm, Lin Sanjiu was still several meters from Reno.

Everything happened too quickly. "Brother!" Rena shrilled. At the same time, Reno had been hit by that person's arm. He stopped falling downward because that impact threw him horizontally, straight toward the building. His body folded in a 90° angle as it headed toward the walls of the building.

One could only imagine how powerful that attack was since it changed Reno's trajectory even though he was freefalling. A few drops of blood fell on Rena's face. She closed her eyes involuntarily and started screaming in Lin Sanjiu's arm.

"Kill him!" Reno's body hit the walls of the bank building violently while Rena screamed. He didn't break through the windows of the building. It wasn't because he had bad luck but that human cannonball had already planned for him to hit a wall.

When Reno hit the wall, the impact was so huge that he vomited blood. After that, his body slipped down to the ground following the walls of the building.

The human cannonball looked like he was going to follow up with another attack. There was another gust of wind, as if the man wouldn't leave Reno until he killed the teenager. Just then, the human cannonball unfolded and changed back into the dark-skinned man Lin Sanjiu met previously. He leaped and barely evaded Lin Sanjiu's attack, then held on to an air-conditioner unit and quickly got into the building.

Lin Sanjiu was too worried and anxious to chase after him. She quickly flew downward. Rena's pink wig had long been blown away. Her black hair, swept by the wind, whipped her face. Her tears leaked as she squeezed her eyes into two slits, bearing the painful upward gust of wind.

After a few heart-stopping seconds, Rena let out a suddenly sob without any warning. Lin Sanjiu finally caught Reno's ankle and broke his fall. With the current strength of Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness, it wasn't as difficult for her to hold on to the siblings as before. With some effort, she flew down slowly until she could put the two children on the ground.

"Brother!" Rena quickly rushed over to check Reno's injuries. While Rena went over to look at her brother, Lin Sanjiu did not dare to even relax her constant scanning. She extended her higher consciousness to its maximum scanning range. She spotted a few people on the rooftop shunning from its edge and concluded that they were Derik and the others. There was no one else hiding near them.

"Did you notice that?" Mrs. Manas said in a rather serious tone.

"Yes," Lin Sanjiu replied grimly.

When that dark-skinned man suddenly unfolded from his ball-like form, Lin Sanjiu saw that the "7" on his back had turned to "8"

at some unknown time.

Things seemed... more complicated than she thought.

"Lin Sanjiu, I think my brother has internal injuries. He doesn't have any external wounds. What should we do?" Rena asked, sounding a little at a loss. Her voice snapped Lin Sanjiu from her thoughts. Rena didn't dare to move Reno too much so she held his head and sighed, "If only there was a doctor around here!"

Lin Sanjiu was jolted by Rena's words.

"There is a doctor here!" Even though he might not be reliable, he diagnosed the siblings' condition correctly back then. "If we just consulted him but not let him do any sort of weird operations, maybe it'll be alright?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself."

"What did that cat said, he works in the provincial hospital, right?" Lin Sanjiu wrote. Reno had not fully recovered from his previous injuries, so it was quite unrealistic that he could survive these additional injuries. "What choice do we have? Let's look for that cat doctor!"

With her guarding them, Lin Sanjiu guessed that the cat wouldn't try anything funny if she was watching.

Rena's expression eased a little as if she agreed that it was their only choice now.

However, they could not leave immediately.

"Lin Sanjiu," Mrs. Manas said solemnly, "they're coming."

Even without Mrs. Manas warning, Lin Sanjiu already saw Derik and the others within her scanning range. They were rushing toward Lin Sanjiu and the siblings.

Chapter 232: 2 VS. 2

Derik and his team, now standing in front of Lin Sanjiu, acted totally different from 30 minutes ago.

"Where is that boy? Derik asked while he smirked, showing the upper left row of his teeth. His voice was as gentle and amiable as before, but there was a hint of insanity on his ugly face. Lin Sanjiu didn't know why she didn't notice that before. There was something about the color of his eyes that made people uneasy. It was as if an artist had accidentally left a splotch of ink on his canvas. The color was uneven, too dark in some spots and too light in others, making it uncomfortable for someone to look at him for too long.

Rena and Lin Sanjiu did not reply and instead only responded by going into their fighting stances.

"Hehe," Zhu Mingchun chuckled, his slow-witted expression was long gone from his face. He narrowed his eyes, while cruelty dripped from his words as he said, "Brother Derik, they probably hid him nearby. Let me look for that brat?"

Hannie Huang, who was standing beside him, gave him a sidelong glance. Her red lips curled, as if she was sneering at him, or was just showing disdain.

Derik didn't even turn to look at him. Using a tone as if discussing about a prey, Derik seemed to ignore the presence of the two enemies in front of him, "Okay. But, you have to bring him back alive. As for the other conditions, you should already know."

Rena turned pale with fury. She had to hold on to the sides of her dress to keep her hands from trembling. Zhu Mingchun accepted Derik's condition and raced in the direction opposite from where Lin Sanjiu and Rena were facing. Rena, who had been eyeing him, immediately sprung into action. She followed in the same direction and leaped up. Then, she attacked Zhu Mingchun with

her [No depiction of body parts below the neck].

"You left your back exposed!" Hannie gave a sharp laugh at the same time her boots clicked noisily against the ground. Her nails painted with red polish flashed as she swooshed in and reached for Rena's back with her hand.

However, there was someone by her side. Obviously, Lin Sanjiu wouldn't let her get her way. Lin Sanjiu turned her body and threw her arm toward Hannie in a sweeping direction. Her chest muscles moved showing her white bones.

Unexpectedly, Hannie did not back away even after seeing that Lin Sanjiu was targeting her throat. Instead, she stretched open her fingers and continued trying to reach for Rena's back. Before Lin Sanjiu could process her confusion, she heard a sound of moving air from behind her. She pulled her arm back and lowered her head. A shadow of a ball-like object flew past the back of her head. A chain-like shadow shook, and Derik pulled the ball-like object back to him. That was Derik's weapon, a meteor hammer. The metal chain was as thick as a person's thigh and there was a heavy metal ball attached to it.

Apparently, Rena had also sensed the danger behind her. She had no choice but to abandon chasing after Zhu Mingchun and jumped aside to avoid Hannie's attack. This all happened in a blink of an eye. Then, Zhu Mingchun tripped and fell heavily to the ground.

The first exchange between the two groups ended in a tie.

Zhu Mingchun, who had fallen, seemed only to care about catching Reno. He rolled aside and leaped up again, showing no sign of fighting back. Before Rena could catch up with him, she had already lost the opportunity. Hannie and Derik chased after her and Lin Sanjiu like haunting spirits. With that, Rena and Lin Sanjiu could only watch helplessly as Zhu Mingchun disappeared into the building behind them.

Lin Sanjiu exchanged a glance with Rena, who was beside her.

They decided not to be bothered by Zhu Mingchun and instead focus on their opponents.

"Oh, aren't you going to chase him?" Derik flashed his one-sided smile again and said gently, "Both of you are pretty confident about that boy's hiding spot."

Lin Sanjiu eyed Derik coldly. She didn't have the mood to hear his bullshit. With a single thought, she flew into the air and swooped down, targeting him. As her higher consciousness form had no weight, her movements were so fast that no one could react. For Derik, this was his first time fighting with such an opponent. He thought he had already prepared himself fully for this fight, but everything happened in a blur. Before he could even defend himself, Lin Sanjiu had already appeared before him.

Next, he felt a sudden massive blow to his chin. The force of the blow was so strong that it felt like his chin had been pounded into his skull. He was struck so hard that for a moment he only felt a numbness and nothing else. Derik only felt the full rage when the force flung him sideways in the air. He realized that he had bitten half his tongue and broke about five teeth. Pain radiated through his nasal cavity and mouth as he started bleeding. For a second, even his vision was blurred.

Lin Sanjiu did not even pause for a second, lunging at him. Scanning with her higher consciousness, she could see that Rena and Hannie were busy fighting. Lin Sanjiu did not have to worry about Rena for the time being. It was more important for her to finish off the little person in front of her.

The strength of her first punch was comparable to a collision with an oncoming train. If a normal person had been hit by that, he might even be decapitated. However, Derik only sustained some injuries. When Lin Sanjiu rushed toward him again, he dodged nimbly and attacked her with his meteor hammer.

Frankly speaking, his attack was swift and powerful. The weight

of the metal ball itself was already quite impressive. Whipping it around using the chain created an even stronger centrifugal force. From the wooshing sound it made, it was almost as if the wind it generated could push someone to the ground. Lin Sanjiu jumped into the air and just stayed afloat. Though the chain of the meteor hammer was about five to six meters, it simply crashed heavily to the ground. When it hit the ground, it stirred up a large amount of dirt and dust.

Even though he had spotted Lin Sanjiu and the siblings flying in the air while he was on the rooftop, he had always assumed that they were using some sort of flying device. It didn't even cross Derik's mind once that this strange being that seemed to be made of flesh and muscles could actually fly at will, moving deftly like a duoluo zhong.

After training her higher consciousness for such a long time, Lin Sanjiu finally realized the benefits of being in a higher consciousness form in battle. Calling it a cheat wasn't even an exaggeration. When she was just a brain, her higher consciousness felt faint, ephemeral. She was like a column of smoke which Rena could not even touch. However, after her training, her higher consciousness was so dense that it appeared solid and was tangible. Not only did her strength increase tenfold, she still retained her previous spirit-like attributes. For example, when Derik suddenly threw an egg-like object he had crushed in his hand, Lin Sanjiu instantly felt a weight on her shoulders. It was as if she was crushed by a thousand mountains. If the item was used on another posthuman, that person could only use their physical strength to resist the downward pressure exerted by the item if they didn't want to get squished to bits, and that was while fighting off Derik's sneak attacks. However, Lin Sanjiu did not have such a worry.

She relaxed for a second and that invisible weight squished her into a flat sheet. Yet, before Derik could smile, she had already squeezed herself out from under that invisible "mountain range".

The function of that item which created that invisible weight was to flatten a person. Since Lin Sanjiu had successfully been flattened, the item lost its effect. Once Lin Sanjiu got out from under it, she regained her original form and was totally unharmed.

[Weight of Mt. Taishan] was an extremely pricey Special Item from the Twelve World Centrum. Just like that, Derik had wasted that item and his face even twitched from that loss. Then, he suddenly looked in another direction.

Just when Lin Sanjiu was wondering why he had not used his active ability, she saw the LP suddenly running away. He even left his weapon on the ground while he ran into the bank building as if he had been frightened out of his wits.

"That's some bad acting," Lin Sanjiu grumbled. After getting Mrs. Manas to help her monitor her scanned surroundings, Lin Sanjiu quickly chased after the man. "Obviously that jerk has a plan up his sleeves."

However, no matter what, she wasn't afraid. In fact, Lin Sanjiu was itching to see Derik's desperate face after he exhausted all his tricks.

Lin Sanjiu pushed open the main door of the building with her body and rushed into the lobby. When she reached it, the lights in the entire bank building suddenly switched off with a click. Darkness enveloped her surroundings. The effectiveness of her higher consciousness scanning was also affected. It took a few seconds before she could gradually see the outlines of her surroundings from the scanned image in her mind.

There was total silence around her. Nothing moved even after some time. However, Lin Sanjiu could clearly sense that Derik had already activated his ability.

Chapter 233: Truth or Dare (1)

Hannie jumped into the air, lifting her heels from the ground. Using the momentum, she swung a black pipe downward. It hit the ground with a dull heavy metallic thud. Crooked cracks appeared on the hard concrete floor immediately and pieces broken concrete and dust filled the air. The very moment before, Rena leaped away and nearly lost her balance when she landed. When she looked down at her feet, she realized that the attack from Hannie had wreaked half the side of her shoes. If she was only half a second late, that black metal pipe would have landed on her feet.

A sudden fury rose from the teenage girl's heart.

"Hey, you aren't slow at dodging," Hannie flashed a smile with her red lips. She looked at Rena as if she was looking at a person's whose fate was already sealed. Hannie pulled the metal pipe from the ground nimbly and also stood straight. Tear. She tore off her mini skirt. Rena only realized then that Hannie had been wearing skintight shorts under her mini skirt all along. The black material had a sheen and looked very elastic. From the looks of it, Hannie was secretly prepared to fight all along.

"Why are these people spending so much effort to kill a few strangers? What would they get from this?" Rena thought to herself and wiped her face with the back of her hand. She could feel the space between her eyebrows twitching. In her fourteen and a half years, this was the first time she was fighting a really strong foe.

After they exchanged quite a few blows, it seemed as though neither Hannie nor Rena had an upper hand. However, after Rena used her [No depiction of body parts below the neck] consecutively for a few times, her opponent had already figured out Rena's usual tactics. At the start, Hannie had no choice but to use her arm to block once. After that, she managed to evade all the attacks from Rena and was not injured even the slightest.

In contrast, Hannie had not even shown any hint of activating her ability. Using only a weapon, Hannie had forced Rena to retreat backward. And, now, Hannie had even ruined Rena's shoe. Rena bit her lip and kicked off her pair of shoes, which she had gotten from one of the local shops. She stepped on the hard cold ground with her white socks, feeling somewhat worried.

Hannie probably had way more combat experience than her. This was the first time she was fighting alone, without her brother and Lin Sanjiu.

"I tired of playing with you, little girl," Hannie suddenly broke into a smile. Her black metal pipe, which was almost 2 meters long, made a swooshing sound as she spun it few times in her hand, creating a blurred circular shadow, making it hard to see the pipe's original form. "Just be a good girl and die. You'll suffer less that way!"

The woman's sharp voice drew close to Rena abruptly. Hannie had suddenly appeared in front of the teenage girl. Stirring wind as she swung her black pipe, Hannie aimed her attack at Rena's neck.

If her attack hit its target, Rena's neck would have ended up like her shoes.

Rena panicked and quickly retaliated with her [No depiction of body parts below the neck] while she stooped down and tried to create some distance between Hannie and herself.

Hannie's black pipe swept noisily past Rena's head, touching her hair. Maintaining her fight stance, Hannie managed to dodge Rena's attack by just shifting her body. While Rena was silently astonished by this, she was shocked when she realized Hannie was hovering above her.

It was too late. Rena couldn't change the direction of her movement. Rena felt her back touching Hannie's palm almost like a self-delivered gift. She immediately felt the warmth from Hannie's hand on her body. Meanwhile, Hannie threw away the

black pipe far away. It fell on the ground not far from them. At the same time, Hannie erupted into a series of sharp laughter and Rena finally heard the woman saying, "[Truth or Dare], activate!"

Rena finally realized what had happened and she felt her heart sinking.

Even though Hannie used that black pipe with impressive finesse, she wouldn't be able to cause any fatal damage with it when fighting with posthumans with enhanced physical attributes. Therefore, it was only used as artful deception.

Similar to her boots, Hannie could create such deceptions which diverted attention with ease. Rena realized that Hannie probably needed to touch her target to activate that [Truth or Dare] ability, and therefore the woman needed to create a false impression that she was a fighter type. When her opponents fall for her deception and focused instead on defending themselves against her physical attack, that was the best time for her to strike.

[Truth or Dare]

This is a party game popular among middle school students and alcoholics with a twist. The ability user would start first, dictating if the target would need to answer a question truthfully, or performing a "dare". The target must then execute accordingly. During the game, both ability user and target cannot attack each other. Disregarding this rule would result in a random punishment. Regardless of the choice made, the target must answer truthfully or successfully perform the dare, otherwise, the person posing the question would gain a chance to attack the target. During this chance, the target would be forced to endure the attack without dodging or countering.

Of course, in this world, there isn't such an unfair one-sided advantage. After the target completes three requests, the roles would switch. Thereafter, the game would take a normal turn-based format. So, dear ability user, please take full advantage of

the first three turns before the ability move toward the fair gameplay.

The question poser can choose any question to ask, however, the "dares" are automatically generated by the ability.

PS: This ability creates opportunities for players to flirt around in the name of the game.

Hannie narrowed her eyes. She tapped her red lips lightly with her long fingernail. Rena and Hannie stood three to four meters away from each other. None of them dared to move unnecessarily.

"What should I choose..." Hannie appeared very pleased with the current situation as she gave a satisfied sigh, "This moment always feels so good. It's addictive."

Rena could hear her own heart pounding loudly. She bit her lips hard.

"Should I ask a question? What should I ask?" Hannie really toying with her prey, like a cat toying with a mouse. She liked it so much that she even felt a little reluctant to pose the first request, "Should I... ask you where your brother is hiding?"

Before Rena could say "in your dreams", the woman in front of her waved her hands. "Oh, but I am not at all interested in knowing where he is. For now, getting you is enough."

While Rena was caught off guard by Hannie's "getting you is enough" comment, and was wondering what she meant, the woman's voice suddenly spoke in a mechanical and flat voice. Her [Truth or Dare] ability announced using her mouth, "Dare 1: Get a phone number from a duoluo zhong in Kisaragi Station."

Chapter 234: Soaring Blue Sky Education Consultancy

"Get a... a duoluozhong's number?" Rena could never imagine in a thousand years that she would hear such a request from Hannie's mouth. She had already prepared herself mentally as she thought that Hannie would get her to hurt herself or jump off a building or something along that thread. When she heard that it was a seemingly simple task, she was a little stunned for a moment.

"How could the task be so simple? It is not even dangerous? How does the requester have an advantage?" Rena thought to herself.

However, Hannie had not finished speaking. "The time limit for this request is 20 minutes. The number you receive must be an actual phone number. It doesn't matter if the call can or cannot be connected. The executor must appear in front of the requester before the time limit. The gender of the duoluozhong does not matter. Start!"

After Hannie finished her monotonous instructions, Rena immediately ran off to complete the request.

Hannie had to stand in the same spot to wait for Rena to return as long as her ability was still activated. As a result, Rena didn't have to worry that Hannie would run off and help Derik fight against Lin Sanjiu.

20 minutes was neither a long nor short time. Before Rena could get a phone number, she had to look for a duoluozhong. However, things don't usually go the way one wants. When Rena didn't need a duoluozhong, they seemed to be everywhere and it was impossible to get rid of all of them. Yet, when Rena wanted to find one, she couldn't even see a single duoluozhong in sight after running and looking around for five minutes.

Rena estimated the time she spent and stopped. She couldn't run

too far as she would not be able to reach Hannie in time. After she surveyed her surroundings, Rena started to feel a little anxious.

"Where do spirits usually appear?"

There were just bank and financial buildings in the street that Rena was in. All of them looked sparkling new and seemed to give off the aura of elitism. No matter what, it didn't seem like any spirits were in those buildings.

" Honestly, there are not many urban legends about banks..." After Rena thought about it, she stomped her feet and quickly dashed into one of the buildings. Even though Rena was really confident, she had heard ghost stories about offices before. As long as there exists such strange tales, urban legends or ghost stories, there would be a real possibility of the relevant spirits existing in this world.

When Rena entered, she found that the office building was dimly lit. There were only a few flickering fluorescent lights along the corridors. As Rena raced across a corridor, the lights would suddenly start flickering rapidly. The constantly changing light intensity was very disorienting. Rena thought she saw someone standing in a corner. Paranoid, Rena moved closer to look at it but it was just a projection.

"Are there any ghosts around?" Rena ran through a few floors. The flickering lights made her more and more flustered. She grew more and more anxious by each passing second. "Quick, can one of you just appear?!"

She ran past some education consultancy firm and she turned into another corridor. There was a female toilet at the end of the corridor. Usually, there are many ghost stories which are set in a female toilet. From afar, Rena could already spot that the toilet door was half open. An indoor plant at the entrance of the toilet had been kicked aside. There was even a piece of toilet paper stuck on one of the walls. Even though the toilet had started to fall into

desolation, there didn't seem to be any spirits around.

"Come on. Has it been 9 minutes already?" Rena took a breath and headed for the toilet, unwilling to accept the situation. She never really had a good concept of time so she wasn't really sure how much time had passed, "I would need five minutes to get a phone number and two to three minutes to run back, so..."

As she thought about this, she had already reached the entrance of the toilet. She looked up and inadvertently realized that the piece of toilet paper she saw was actually half a pale human's face.

The human face had moved from its previous position as Rena walked close to the toilet. When the girl looked up, her face nearly touched that pale, snow-white face. They were so close that their eyelashes were nearly touching. The top half of that human face had been squished together. The face opened its black toothless mouth and curled its lips, showing Rena a smile.

Rena couldn't help suddenly letting out a loud scream. She retreated a few steps backward. Before she could steady her racing heart, she stepped forward once again.

"You came at the right time," she still sounded fearful but for her brother, Lin Sanjiu and herself, the teenager demanded softly with her white lips, "Give me your phone number!"

As she said this, her fists glowed and she punched the white face. She purposely avoided the spirit's face and hit its ear. As its ear evaporated into a cloud of smoke, the smile fell from the spirit's face. It turned its too large eyes to its ear, showing its disbelief at what had just happened.

"Give me your phone number!" Rena had already rushed into the toilet. She had trapped that duoluo zhong which was still wearing a woman's office wear in the corner of the toilet. "Otherwise, I'll kill you!"

When facing a posthuman with considerable experience, a

normal duoluozhong couldn't do much to fight back. If the duoluozhong decided to take on Rena directly, it would have disappeared into a cloud of smoke long ago.

However, now, it turned its pupilless white eyeballs and a smile slowly appeared on its face again.

"If... you gave me... a piece of toilet paper," it said slowly, "I... would... tell you."

It did not even ask for a reason and had already caught its opponent's weakness.

Rena immediately frowned.

A normal duoluozhong combat ability was definitely lower than a posthuman who had already had a few level-ups. However, that was dependent on a condition. That condition is that the posthuman must not be dragged into the scenario which exists in the particular urban legend. There are certain special situations in an urban legend where the duoluozhong involved would gain a unique "peak" strength.

Taking the famous Sadako as an example. That situation would probably be "when a person watches the infamous videotape". The moment when Sadako crawls out of a television and attacks a posthuman would be when she would reach this "peak" strength. At that particular point, a spirit duoluozhong could even be a few hundred times more dangerous than usual.

Rena had done a lot of background research, so naturally she wasn't fooled.

"I know what urban legend you belong to." Rena sneered, she clenched her fists tightly while she trembled from her brewing anger. "When you are in a toilet cubicle in a woman's bathroom, a woman from the adjacent cubicle would suddenly say that she did not bring a packet of tissue paper with her and then she'll ask you to pass her some toilet paper. Supposedly, if a person tries to pass

some toilet paper, the woman would grab the victim's hand and drag her to hell... Am I right?"

The face did not say a word but rolled her eyes and stared at Rena's hands.

"If you don't give me... any... toilet paper, I won't... tell you..." the spirit smiled with malice. "You can kill me... if you want."

It had probably overheard everything Rena mumbled to herself. It knew that Rena was hard pressed for time and did not have much choice. Rena felt her blood vessels pulsing. Normally, she possessed a sense of superficial superiority as a teenager, and people rarely created such difficult situations for her in Red Nautilus. Furthermore, this was just a duoluo zhong. Even though she told herself in her head not to be rash, she couldn't overcome her impulse in the end. She punched the duoluo zhong. At the same time, she grabbed one of its arms and tore it off. Her opponent screeched and Rena said vehemently, "Are you going to tell me your number?!"

The duoluo zhong quickly stopped screeching. It looked at its arm, which had already dissipated into the air like ashes. She laughed cruelly and slowly crouched on the ground and started crawling down from the wall like a spider.

"I... will wait for you... in the other cubicle..." it said as it crawled. Something on its chest swayed, illuminated by the light in the toilet.

Rena was stunned for a second. Before she could think anything through, Rena had already picked up the duoluo zhong and looked at its chest. After staring at its chest for a few seconds, Rena suddenly couldn't hold back her laughter.

"I've never seen such a stupid thing," the young girl's crisp voice sounded in the toilet, she was relieved. "Yu Meizhen!"

There was a metal employee pass holder hanging in front of the

duoluozhong's neck. There was a small line of words "Soaring Blue Sky Education Consultancy". Then, there was a line of words which was slightly larger: Overseas Studies Consultant: Teacher Yu Meizhen. The duoluozhong opened her mouth as if she was about to say something. Yet, she had already turned into smoke the very next second.

Chapter 235: Truth or Dare 2

When Rena rushed back to Hannie hastily, her last thin thread of hope disappeared completely when she saw the smile on Hannie's foxy face.

"You took 21 minutes and 34 seconds. You have exceeded the time limit." Hannie reported in a rather monotonous manner. When she finished reporting, her voice quickly changed into an overly-pleased tone. She watched Rena's expression and said slowly as if reveling in pleasure, "How was it? You probably thought that fulfilling that request would be very easy, that it wasn't demanding, right?"

Rena took a breath of air. She felt her heart sinking like lead.

She had wasted quite some time failing to get that duoluo zhong's number by interrogation. After that, she rushed to "Soaring Blue Sky Education Consultancy" and found the HR department. She wasted most of her time digging through various cabinets before finding Yu Meizhen's contact number from her employee file. Even though Rena ran as fast as she could, she did not reach Hannie within the 20 minutes time limit.

"The most impressive part of my ability is that the 'dares' it issues may appear random at first glance. However, it is actually generated after a computation of the surrounding environmental and situational information. The first three 'dares' are designed to give me an advantage... Oh, I don't mind letting you know this," Hannie said as she toyed with a few Special Items in her hand as if she was undecided which of it she should use to attack Rena. "I am unable to get you to hurt yourself or get you to commit suicide using my ability. It also wouldn't generate an impossible task. After all, games don't work that way in our everyday lives... Though that is a drawback, it is just a very fun ability."

Rena stood motionlessly. As she had exceeded the time limit, she

had to endure a single attack from Hannie. Just a moment ago, she had realized in shock that her body had already stiffened and she had no control over it.

Rena had never been known for her physical resilience. If the woman in front of her attacked her with the intention to kill, she probably wouldn't survive.

Rena's mind was blank for a few minutes. After that, tears started pouring from the teenage girl's eyes without any warning. Perhaps it was fear or something else. Not even Rena could describe her feeling. After all, she was too young. In this world, the most nerve-wracking thing might be to witness your own death approaching. What else could surpass that?

"Let's use this. I don't want to waste any of the good stuff." Hannie picked up her black metal pipe from the floor leisurely. She stored the items she had brought out, "This should be enough."

When they exchanged blows previously, Rena had more or less figured out Hannie's strength. If Hannie chooses to use that black metal pipe, she wouldn't be able to kill her! While Rena felt a sudden sense of relief, she couldn't help doubting this "new lease of life" she was given.

"Why would she simply kill me? Does this woman enjoy this game that much?" She thought to herself.

Before Rena could process her thoughts fully, they were crushed by the sudden force from a black shadow which hit her. Rena's ribcage was instantly shattered. Her organs felt like they were scrambled. She couldn't say a single word as she felt a suffocating pain. She nearly blacked out for five to six seconds. She only regained her vision after vomiting a large mouthful of blood.

It was obvious that Hannie had intentionally held herself back when she was fighting with Rena. The strength she used in this attack was far beyond what Rena had expected. Thankfully, Rena was still alive.

From her blurry vision, Rena saw that woman in boots walking toward her.

While the teenager lay on the ground defenselessly, Hannie pulled up her dress and looked at her back. Then, she walked back holding her black pipe in her hand and seemed rather unhappy.

She turned to look at the teenager on the ground and snorted, "You won't die. Get up. You still have three—"

Hannie had just said those words, but then her expression stiffened, as if she had realized that she had let something slip. She immediately shut her mouth.

Rena could still hear the ringing in her ears; it was the sound of her blood flowing. She almost thought that she misheard Hannie.

"Three what?" Rena asked softly after she coughed a few times while she lay on the ground.

Hannie did not answer her.

"Aren't you going to stand up? I am going to state the second request," Hannie said a little impatiently, "I still have two chances... mmm..." After she said that, she seemed to be caught in her own thoughts.

Those words quickly caught Rena's attention and she set aside her doubts about that number three. With much difficulty, she propped herself up, pushing her hands against the ground. She didn't know how she was still able to stand up. She was surprised to find that the suffocating pain she felt had vanished very quickly even though she clearly suffered a serious blow from Hannie.

When she pressed her abdomen, it did hurt badly. If it wasn't for that, she would have forgotten that she was injured.

"Well, for the second request..." Hannie dragged her words, "I will choose dare. I don't want to hear a little kid's dawdling about her true feelings."

Her voice changed the next second and, just as before, she spoke in a mechanical, monotonous tone.

"Steal something from Zhu Mingchun. Condition: You can steal anything. You can only steal, but not snatch. You will have to steal something from the person without him noticing. Zhu Mingchun's current location is unknown. You have 10 minutes."

"This request is way harder than the previous." Rena was stunned. She looked at the woman in front of her almost in despair. Then, a muffled sound suddenly came from the bank building. The sound was very soft. If she was talking to Hannie at that moment, Rena would have missed that unusual disturbance.

"Lin Sanjiu—" A glimmer of hope appeared on Rena's grim face. No matter what, she had Lin Sanjiu backing her up. Lin Sanjiu had saved herself and her brother many times and was a very reliable companion. Rena was sure that Lin Sanjiu would probably bring her brother to a safe location even without her...

"I give up for this request. Just use whatever attack you have on me," Rena made a decision and said coldly while she gritted her teeth. She didn't forget that Hannie only had three chances. After that, she would become the requester. As the second request was near impossible, Rena didn't want to waste any time. If she acted rashly, she might even exacerbate her injuries.

Rena wondered if she could survive till she could become the requester in this game. Even though she was a fourteen-and-a-half-years-old girl from Twelve Worlds Centrum, she was also just another person in an apocalyptic world. Hannie was frowning. When Rena told Hannie to "go ahead", she was already prepared to die.

Chapter 236: House of Refinery 1

Rena did not know that Lin Sanjiu had been observing her fight with Hannie all along. Lin Sanjiu could see them through the window of the bank, scanning her surroundings with her higher consciousness. However, even though she witnessed Rena bearing that attack from Hannie, Lin Sanjiu could not do anything to help her. The lobby of the bank was pitch black, and as a result the image of the bank's interior created by her higher consciousness wasn't very clear at all. Lin Sanjiu had to be very vigilant to guard herself against any sudden attacks from Derik.

Lin Sanjiu only felt slightly relieved when she saw Rena crawling up from the ground with some effort. She quickly pulled her attention back to her nearby surroundings. Lin Sanjiu had been in the bank for some time, however, there seemed to be no hint of what Derik's ability was. She didn't even know where he was.

Once Lin Sanjiu stepped into the lobby of the bank, the doors and windows seemed to have melted into the darkness. She almost thought that she had been thrown into another dimension, but she managed to see the windows via her higher consciousness. However, no matter which direction she was heading, she could not find the door she came from, even after walking for a few minutes. There was only darkness. This was also why she couldn't help Rena.

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help starting to feel a little impatient. However, the image created by her higher consciousness vibrated rapidly for a short moment and suddenly turned black with a snap. When the image in her head lit up again, the scene had changed.

There was a warm yellow light just a few steps away from her in the darkness. In contrast with the dark surroundings, It seemed out of the place and conspicuous. There was a family of three sitting in a formal manner under the yellow light. It was as though they were going to take a family portrait. They all had rigid smiles

on their faces.

In every sense, this family appeared to be very normal. The father was nearing middle age and had a gentle appearance. His petite wife was beside him and was holding his arm. A boy, about nine, sat in front of them and was fidgeting in his chair. He seemed rather annoyed that he had to sit down to take a photo with his parents.

However, it was too abnormal for them to be here.

Within the pitch-black bank lobby, a strange yellow light illuminated the family. The area surrounding them was unusually dark. It was as if that bit of light had been cornered by the darkness. Yet, the family seemed oblivious to their surroundings. The mother tapped her restless son's shoulder. Next, the family of three adjusted their expression and looked up smiling.

They happened to be looking at Lin Sanjiu, who was right in front of them.

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help shivering a little.

Suddenly, more people appeared within her scanning range, as if they had been rallied by someone or something.

They weren't all just a family unit of three. There were also young couples, groups of friends and elderly couples with their grandchildren. They all seemed to be made of flesh and blood and looked very realistic. The only thing that was wrong was that they weren't supposed to be there.

Though they were surrounded by an unusual darkness, they looked very happy. It was as though they were strolling in the park or drinking tea at home.

"Are these duoluo zhong?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help asking herself, but Mrs. Manas naturally couldn't answer her question. Sounding worried, Mrs. Manas reminded Lin Sanjiu, "Don't try to flaunt your abilities. You must be very careful. Even though your higher

consciousness is powerful and you can morph yourself, it doesn't mean that you are immune to all attacks.

And indeed, Lin Sanjiu could still be harmed by high damage attacks. If Derik did not use his [Weight of Mt. Taishan] but instead chose to use a chain of Ripple Spheres, Lin Sanjiu would have been wounded.

She kept a cautious distance between herself and the people around her. Following the corners of the lobby, she decided to observe her surroundings first. Though that sounded simple, it became difficult for her after just two to three minutes.

More and more people gradually emerged from the darkness. The small groups of people gathered together, creating larger groups. There were groups of families and friends. Some of them were chatting quietly while others remained motionless. The number of people grew and the lobby quickly became crowded. There were people standing in every corner. It was nearly impossible for Lin Sanjiu to walk around while avoiding contact with those strange people.

While the number of people appearing continued to increase, Lin Sanjiu felt gradually more and more nervous. She stared hard at the image created in her mind, almost afraid that she would miss any slight deviances. However, she found it very odd that the people did not show any aggression toward her even after some time.

"What are they doing?" she thought to herself curiously.

When the crowd shown in the image in her mind reached about three hundred people, Derik's voice suddenly sounded without any warning. She didn't know where his voice was coming from, but it resonated loudly, at an ear-splitting volume, within the four walls of the large space. It was as though he was speaking through some loudspeaker.

"Welcome! You are now within the microenvironment of my

ability called [House of Refinery]. Let me give you an advice. If you obey the rules within this space, you might have a chance of survival."

"Rules? What rules?" Just when Lin Sanjiu was distracted and was just about to write something, Derik's voice vanished without a trace after a "bzzt" sound. Following which, the two people standing closest to her started moving.

They were a pair of young couple. Both of them seemed to be students. The two people turned to her and looked at her expressionlessly. Then, they walked in front of her.

"You have ten seconds," the tall male student said stiffly, "Guess which of us is Derik."

Lin Sanjiu was startled. She was very puzzled but before she could react, the girl had started counting, "10, 9, 8..."

Each second passed quickly. The girl had already counted to 4. However, Lin Sanjiu was clueless. As she didn't know what would happen after the time was up, she pointed to the girl in a moment of desperation.

She had a 50% chance of getting it right, so she decided to just guess blindly. The girl stopped when Lin Sanjiu's bony finger pointed at her. She smiled.

"Was I right?" Before Lin Sanjiu could withdraw her finger, a black shadow appeared before her eyes and was about to hit her eye socket. She was caught off guard, and hurriedly shifted her body sideways. The black shadow swept past her temple muscles, it was quick and powerful.

After that, the girl spoke, "You're wrong."

The tall male student who had attacked Lin Sanjiu did not revert back to Derik's original appearance. After he noticed that Lin Sanjiu had dodged his attack, he pulled out a long knife from the back of his waist. Using his arm strength, he thrust the knife

toward the organs around Lin Sanjiu's abdomen. After the girl spoke, she took two steps back and disappeared into the darkness.

At the same time, Lin Sanjiu had regained her composure when the male student tried to stab her. Knowing her own strength, she hit the back of the knife with the back of her hand. She had intentionally used a lot of strength with this attack. "Crack." Crack lines appeared on the back of the knife. The knife broke into pieces and fell to the ground.

"Such attacks are worse than when we were fighting outside!" Lin Sanjiu said to herself. Her left hand flashed by the male student as she feinted a punch to his stomach. Her opponent twisted his body to avoid that blow, but Lin Sanjiu had already kicked him with her left leg. Her kick landed directly on his back.

After getting in a hit, Lin Sanjiu did not follow up with an attack. Instead, she retreated back. She did not forget that she was now in a very strange environment.

The male student climbed up from the floor. As if he felt no pain, he continued attacking Lin Sanjiu once again. Lin Sanjiu was defending herself when another voice suddenly rang out from the darkness, "You have 10 seconds. Guess which of us is Derik."

Lin Sanjiu was shocked. She turned back and realized that the first family she saw had approached her at some unknown time. They were now by her side. They didn't have much expression on their faces, and almost seemed gloomy. The little boy opened his mouth and started counting, "10, 9..."

Chapter 237: Does Derik have an identity issue?

Lin Sanjiu had never noticed that ten seconds was such a short time. The tall male student attacked her ferociously. He attacked her as if that was his only goal and showed no regard for his life. It took Lin Sanjiu some effort to create some distance between him and herself with two consecutive attacks. She turned back to the family and was just about to randomly choose one of them when the child finished his countdown, "Time's up."

Her heart missed a beat. However, Lin Sanjiu had no time to understand her own emotions because the tall male student had started attacking her again. This time, when he moved, a shadow leaped from the family of three and coordinated with him. The person targeted Lin Sanjiu's lower body with a low sweep kick.

"You didn't identify me correctly!" the petite young wife giggled. A metallic sheen flashed from the tip of her shoes. It had obviously been modified. Lin Sanjiu did not wish to test if her higher consciousness body could withstand their attacks. She flipped her body and flew in the opposite direction until she heard a third voice.

"You have ten seconds. Guess which of us is Derik."

"How can there be so many Deriks?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. An indescribable feeling welled up from her heart, she spat. As an old woman started counting down, Lin Sanjiu mustered her strength and stretched out her left arm. Using it like a whip, she targeted the elderly couple in front of her.

With her speed, it was almost impossible for any human to evade that attack. Her arm struck the elderly couple head-on. The old woman who had just almost said "8" was forced to stop when she was hit. At the same time, Lin Sanjiu's two initial attackers rushed toward her again. Lin Sanjiu bent her head to evade their attack

and quickly countered with another punch. The old woman who had been struck suddenly leaped up with incredible agility and jumped to join the scuffle.

"If I don't make a guess, all these people would join in the fight!" Lin Sanjiu thought gloomily. At the same time, she received a kick from that petite wife. Even though her "body" was now quite dense, that kick did manage to disperse a bit of her higher consciousness. Just when Lin Sanjiu was dealing with the attacks from four people, she heard a spine-chilling voice nearby.

Actually, it was not "a" terrifying voice, but a unified voice of quite a few people saying the same thing in unison.

"You have ten seconds. Guess which of us is Derik."

Lin Sanjiu had already heard the same words a couple of times. Now, it was coming from three groups of people. If Lin Sanjiu's vocal cords had developed, she would have shouted in frustration. As she was too busy fending off her attackers, she didn't even look at the three groups and just randomly point at a few people. She didn't even know if she had really pointed her finger at anyone in particular.

"You've guessed correctly!" a young girl announced cheerfully and disappeared into the darkness with her parents. Before Lin Sanjiu could even breathe, two black shadows started heading her way. "You're wrong!" they shouted and rushed toward her.

The situation got worse the following minute.

Regardless of whether the person was a man, woman, old or young, tall or short, or even a LP, anyone could be Derik. While she continued fighting, Lin Sanjiu tried her best to choose people who had different attributes. However, apart from her few random lucky guesses, she was unable to find any underlying pattern.

Under such circumstances, it was too difficult for her to think calmly and analyze the patterns. There were more and more

people asking her to identify Derik and, sometimes, a few batches of people appeared at the same time. There are times when an earlier group had not finish their countdown but there would suddenly be a new voice. In any case, anyone surrounded by almost a hundred people, while fight constantly and listening to crowd's buzzing voices, would find it impossible to think clearly.

"You've got to preserve!" Mrs. Manas spoke out anxiously. It was useless to stare and analyze the image from her higher consciousness because the whole scenery had been filled by the top of many people' heads. A wave-like crowd of arms headed toward Lin Sanjiu, trying to attack her. There was no point trying to be careful at that moment because every inch around Lin Sanjiu was filled by people.

Even if they randomly waved their arms, they could hit Lin Sanjiu. Let alone when each of these people was targeting Lin Sanjiu with all sorts of methods. Lin Sanjiu would have been in a more terrible state but luckily she could fly up and evade some attacks every now and then.

However, being in the air did not guarantee her safety. Whenever she flew upward, she would become a very obvious target. Therefore, unless necessary, Lin Sanjiu would rather hide and dodge within the crowd.

"Could all these people be Derik?" she gritted her teeth and asked herself. She was holding a dagger that she had taken from someone. She stabbed a man's neck viciously. The man glowed and slowly faded away. "I have already gotten rid of 30 to 40 Deriks, this doesn't make sense!"

However, she didn't have time to think. Her full focus was on fighting. There was no safe spot for her. While Lin Sanjiu shifted sideways and dodged a knife, she would also need to use her arm to knock over a person coming from the side. To avoid a kick from the back, she split herself into two and let that person miss. In this pose, Lin Sanjiu had to kick a few more people away from her.

It wasn't just multi-tasking. She had to react to about eight types of different fight styles. Gradually, she stopped thinking. Lin Sanjiu entered a sort of state. She couldn't tell if she was numb or extremely focused. She could only react to the attacks raining down upon her and nothing else.

Though the endless attackers who came down upon her like a tsunami were reasonably strong and had good stamina, at best they were only around the level of people who had just become posthumans. None of them had any abilities. As a result, though Lin Sanjiu found it difficult to keep up at times, with the current strength of her higher consciousness, she was like a sturdy millstone grinding her enemies slowly into dust.

When the space around her finally felt wider and the number of people gradually decreased, Lin Sanjiu finally had the time to take a breather and realize that her opponents had stopped attacking.

From her higher consciousness, she could see that though she had already halved the number of people, there were still nearly 100 people around her. Lin Sanjiu couldn't believe that she could actually get rid of about 80 to 90 people, who were at a very basic posthuman level, in just a few minutes.

A red body floated quietly in midair observing the group of people below coldly.

Finally, a man and a woman emerged from the crowd.

While Lin Sanjiu was surprised by that and wanted to attack them, the woman suddenly spoke calmly, "Between the both of us, who is Derik?"

Chapter 238: House of Refinery (2)

"Why?"

When she heard the woman beside her counting down from 10, Lin Sanjiu suddenly had an intuition about what was happening. She had learned her lesson. Even though she was still thinking about the situation, she hastily pointed at the man before the end of the countdown. It didn't really matter who she thought was Derik. As long as she chose someone, even if she was wrong, only the one who recognized him or herself as Derik would stay to attack her. If she was lucky, both people would disappear into the darkness.

This was also the reason why she found the situation very hard to understand.

The man she pointed at showed his expressionless face and lowered his head. Then, he turned and disappeared into the darkness. Simultaneously, the woman giggled and changed into a dark shadow which was heading fast toward Lin Sanjiu.

Sure enough, things unfolded the same way as before. After a few short minutes, Lin Sanjiu had developed an instinct to deal with these people. She twisted, stooped and dodged the attacks artfully, in an experienced manner as she went with the flow. They didn't attack her in any sort of unexpected manner.

At first, Lin Sanjiu thought that Derik was trying to use a huge-crowd strategy, so she was puzzled. However, from the looks of things, it wasn't the case. "Why did he need me to 'identify Derik'? No, no, if he wanted to use a huge-crowd strategy, he didn't need to ask her to differentiate between the people in the groups. He could have just got the few hundred people to rush at me at once?"

Since there was a limited space, if they just crowded around her all at the same time, she would already be badly injured.

The exact scenario occurred once again. Different groups of people appeared before Lin Sanjiu asking her to guess which of them was Derik. In order to reduce the number of people, Lin Sanjiu just made random choices. She managed to actually make the right guess a couple of time. However, most of her guesses were wrong. The number of people were quickly reduced to about 30 to 40 people.

After fighting with a crowd like a huge ocean, Lin Sanjiu didn't fret over that 30 or 40 people. After their numbers dropped, their attack wasn't really that impressive.

Just as Lin Sanjiu thought about this, she noticed something flashing at the edge of her scanning radius. She suddenly felt the alarm bells in her mind ringing. "Dodge!" Mrs. Manas' sharp voice exploded.

Lin Sanjiu didn't have time to think too much. She instinctively leaped up and used the momentum to propel herself forward. Before she landed, she grabbed a grim-looking man. She gripped his collar and threw him backward.

A black flower which had suddenly sneaked close to her swallowed the man soundlessly. It wasn't a true flower, but it seemed to be created by the darkness around them. A few streaks of silver light seemed to twist around the darkness, creating the petals of the flower. When the person's shoulder touched the stamen of the flower, it opened up and the man's body slid into the dark opening.

The flash that Lin Sanjiu saw was the streaks of light from the flower.

"This is an ability?" Lin Sanjiu was shocked and thought to herself. "Why, why would they suddenly develop abilities?"

A withered young girl, about the age of ten, held onto the black flower's roots with her two skinny hands. She stared at Lin Sanjiu creepily. She threw the flower and it started spinning toward Lin

Sanjiu. It was apparently the girl's ability.

"Are these people all posthumans?" Lin Sanjiu evaded the attack in a very unsightly manner. She looked at the few dozen people left. She ran toward an empty spot because she could see quite a few people' hands glowing. They were obviously preparing to use their ability.

Lin Sanjiu inhaled deeply. She didn't care to conserve her higher consciousness right now. She activated her [No coincidence. No story]. With her current condition, she was using her higher consciousness like a fuel each time she activated her active ability. It expended her higher consciousness very quickly. Furthermore, if she entered that state like when she was in Oasis, she would have no chance of survival.

However, she had to live through this before she could think about revival.

Since she had already started using her ability, she also decisively decided to use her [Defence Forcefield]. With two layers of protection, she took a large risk and rushed directly at the few people. She didn't know which of them activated an ability. Her abdomen hurt slightly, and almost half of her abdominal muscles which had already developed were consumed. Meanwhile, she activated her [Mosaic Censorship] and turned the few people into smoke immediately.

The subsequent battle was a very tough one. While Lin Sanjiu fought off her foes, Mrs. Manas monitored the expenditure of her higher consciousness very strictly. Every now and then, Mrs. Manas would tell her to stop her attacks so that she could recover some of her higher consciousness.

If she continued fighting, Lin Sanjiu knew that it would be a little tough, but she had the confidence that she could kill all of them. However, the people attacking her stopped again.

Once again, the people started asking her to identify Derik. This

time, she only had five seconds. Lin Sanjiu didn't know if she was imagining things but she felt that the speed of them talking and disappearing into the darkness seemed to be faster. It was so fast that she couldn't really keep up with them. She could only try her best to fend off the attacks while she made her choices.

When the number fell from 38 to 19, she only had one correct guess. When it fell from 19 to 9, she didn't even make a single correct guess. When the number fell from 9 to 3, Lin Sanjiu had already used up a large amount of her higher consciousness. Her foot bones, tibia, and all the muscles and bones above her kneecap disappeared completed. At that moment, she was legless and was just floating in the air.

The three people who were left had incredible combat capabilities and their abilities were unfathomably powerful. Lin Sanjiu didn't know where they were hiding before and why they didn't attack her earlier.

Lin Sanjiu quickly understood this mystery. They didn't fight for long, and the people stopped. Then, they faced Lin Sanjiu and asked the said the same familiar words, "Guess which of us is Derik?"

Without much consideration, Lin Sanjiu made a random choice. A vague thought appeared in her mind.

Two people disappeared into the darkness. The remaining person suddenly became shorter. Like an ice cream melting in summer, it just suddenly became short. After that, his appearance became something like clay. An invisible hand sculpted the person's face and gradually the person began to look like Derik.

This was the first time she had seen Derik since she entered this place.

"Hi! Oh boy, you really are a strange fellow," Derik laughed when his appearance stabilized and he observed Lin Sanjiu.

"I understand!" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help shouting to Mrs. Manas as she had a sudden eureka moment.

Chapter 239: Let's Die Together

The teenage girl scraped her delicate skin against the rough concrete ground. However, that bit of pain was long overwhelmed by a stronger surge of pain from her injuries. Rena closed her eyes. She felt a warmth within her nasal cavity. While warm blood dripped from her body, she felt a slight tickling feeling at the side of her mouth. She coughed. A wheezing sound came deep from her chest and she finally managed to inhale a breath of air.

"Why am I still alive? " she thought to herself, perplexed.

At that moment, she focused her eyes on a single faint twinkling star in the dark sky. It felt like a little consolation from heaven. Usually, a person full of energy and drive toward their goal would not notice such minute details.

Rena turned over with much effort and she accidentally tore the large wound between her chest and abdomen. For a second, Rena couldn't even catch her breath. She laid in the darkness without moving for quite some time. She realized that she wasn't dead yet.

Even after Hannie used some sort of Special Item and created a deep large wound around her diaphragm area, she did not die. Her clothes were soaked with blood, that continued dripping from the wound. Her clothes were undamaged. Hannie's attack had damaged her skin, muscles and internal organs bypassing her clothes. If she didn't have her clothes to hold her broken body together, perhaps her guts would already have spilled out from her body.

Rena panted heavily and slowly stood up with her trembling legs.

"I'm still alive. So, is that all you've got?" Rena tried to smile but she looked a little pitiful instead.

Hannie's expression wasn't that fantastic either.

That last attack was supposed to be lethal. It was Hannie's third

attack after she activated her [Truth or Dare] ability. In other words, Rena was the requester for the next game round. She sneered, feeling somewhat restlessly, and tightened her hands around her black metal pipe.

"You were supposed to die. This doesn't make sense." Her eyes glowered cruelly. She wanted to take a look at Rena, but the next round of her [Truth or Dare] had already started so she couldn't move at will.

"Maybe, I am just very tenacious," Rena said softly as she coughed. "It's my turn to be a requester now."

"Yes," Hannie raised one of her brows. "Before you make your request, I want to tell you something."

The woman's lips turned upward, showing a smile, "If I attack you one more time, you will definitely die," she spat through her teeth. "Do you have the confidence to kill me with a single request?"

Rena did not say a word. She just breathed strenuously. With her current condition, speaking took a considerable toll on her body.

Hannie made a disdainful sound before keeping quiet and displaying a nasty expression. After a few seconds, she asked, "What will you choose? Truth or Dare?"

"Truth." Rena was almost whispering, she sounded so weak that her voice was almost inaudible.

Hannie showed a "I knew it" expression on her face and scoffed, "Are you going to ask me questions about the weakness of my ability?"

Rena was momentarily stunned. Her mid-pubescent small face turned visibly white. It was very apparent to Hannie what the girl had planned to do.

"So, Hannie is prepared?" Rena's lips trembled and her body swayed as if she couldn't stand straight. After she lowered her head

and thought for some time, she muttered, "Then... I'll still choose Truth."

Hannie eyed her coldly, "Your question."

Rena's lips was even paler than her face. She appeared determined to put all her hopes and bets on that single question.

"As the ability owner, you definitely know what circumstances would kill you in a single round! Tell me!"

Hannie's expression turned icy cold. Then, she suddenly laughed mockingly, "Even if you know the answer, do you think you have the chance to execute? If I answer you, I won't die. Instead, you're just going to die earlier."

Rena panted and did not say a word. She did consider about that. However, even if she was going to die, she just wanted to create an opportunity for her brother and Lin Sanjiu to know that woman's weakness.

Seeing that Rena had no intention to change her request, Hannie scrutinized Rena for a while. She had some suspicions. Her face gradually turned grim, perhaps after wondering why Rena was still not dead. When she opened her mouth, the words she said startled Rena, "I chose not to answer. I don't know what you're planning... But even if you are about to die, I wouldn't reveal things I shouldn't reveal." Hannie smiled coldly, "You can come attack me."

Rena did not expect that Hannie would be so tight-lipped so she didn't know what to do momentarily.

"How should I attack her? I'm badly injured and almost at death's door while she's full of vitality... no, if I could kill her with one attack—" Rena quickly ran through all the Special Item she brought along with her in her mind, trying to find for something that was lethal.

"The fly-whisk is more powerful, maybe I should use it—"

Rena's hands froze because she remembered that she was alive,

even though she should have died from her injuries. She considered the possibility that the number on her back was related to the reason she was alive. If that was the case, she wasn't sure if the same thing also applied to Hannie.

"You won't die. Get up. You still have 3..." Hannie's words suddenly surfaced in Rena's mind. Rena zoned out for a moment and suddenly realized that her previous logic was all wrong.

She should have thought of that!

The information from Hannie's slip-up already explained more than enough. She wouldn't die because she still had 3.

If she didn't have 3, but had 2, she probably wouldn't die too because there isn't a large difference. Using this logic, a person would die when the number on their back reached 0. Following this line of thought, the number on their backs represented some sort of lifebar, or health point.

At the start, Rena remembered that the number on her back was 4. After Hannie attacked her once, the number became 3. If she wasn't dead now, it was possible that she had not used up all that number. If Rena wanted to kill Hannie with one attack, she had to reduce the number of Hannie's back to zero with just one try.

However, she had a problem. She didn't know what number was on Hannie's back.

Panting, Rena's body swayed as she approached Hannie weakly and stood in front of the woman. Hannie looked at her coldly without moving an inch.

"If I ask you what's your number, you definitely wouldn't tell me..." the teenage girl placed her hand on the back of her neck. Rena removed a white-colored necklace among the dozens of colorful necklaces she wore. "1, 2, 3..."

She started to count the beads on the necklace.

"There are 20 beads." Rena looked up and stared at Hannie's

darkening face. "No, I should say that there are 20 Ripple Spheres."

As she said that, the white color paint gradually faded from the pearl-like beads and revealed the Ripple Spheres' original shiny surface.

"No, no! Are you stupid? You can't run away! If you use so many Ripple Sphere so close to you, you will be killed by the explosion!" Hannie's expression changed rapidly. This was the first time she sounded anxious. Due to the restrictions of her ability, she could only deactivate her ability after receiving an attack from Rena.

"It's alright. Let's die together." Rena smiled faintly and tossed the Ripple Spheres.

Chapter 240: Hinting at a Blind Man with Flirtatious Glances

"I have been fooled by him since the start!" Lin Sanjiu expressed her rage to Mrs. Manas when she saw Derik smiling in front of her. Despite her anger, on the surface, Lin Sanjiu was just a ghastly-looking skinless being made of muscles, flesh, and bones.

"He mentioned to follow the rules..." her voice was filled with annoyance. "The name of his ability is just very straightforward. This is a refinery!"

Derik suddenly burst out laughing, as if he could sense the psychological state of the "muscle" person in front of him.

"Every time! Every time a person survives until I appear, I really appreciate the expressions on their face when they learn the truth," he tidied his coattail jacket. Smile wrinkles appeared at the corner of his eyes and his cheeks, "Now, it had become a sort of tradition before I start fighting. I feel that it brings me luck. From your reaction, I guess you are already somewhat aware?"

The blood-red figure nodded.

"That's right," Derik continued, feeling contented, "from the beginning, you shouldn't try to identify 'Derik' because each time you do that, it is just a refining process."

Lin Sanjiu let out a deep sigh inwardly. That was also what she had inferred.

From the start, she shouldn't even try to identify the Deriks within the groups. The easiest option for her was actually to brave the few hundred people in the space all at once and attack them directly. That was also the best way out of the situation. Even though the number of people would drop by almost half after a round of guessing, giving a false impression that things were getting easier, the people did not really vanish. Instead, they were

'refined'.

One way to explain this is that each time Lin Sanjiu made a guess, it was a refining process. The capabilities of the people who disappear from the space would actually be distributed between the remaining people.

Such a refining process not only compressed the people's combat capabilities, but it was a good ground for powerful abilities and fighting techniques to develop. This was also why the crowd first started fighting physically but eventually developed abilities.

Derik's House of Refinery had the ability to fuse and refine the combative capabilities of a few hundred people before finally infusing these capabilities into one person. The end result was the Derik in front of Lin Sanjiu.

"That's to say, this LP has power equivalent to a few hundred people?" Mrs. Manas asked in a mumble.

Before Lin Sanjiu could reply her, Derik spoke with a dream-like voice. "The few hundred posthumans in this space are all people who had died in my House of Refinery. After they died, they became my nourishment. I absorbed their most powerful abilities, chose the strongest physique and developed the most marvellous talents... I am an amalgamation of all these people but I far surpass their combined strength... You wouldn't understand the feeling of being at the very top of all these people."

Lin Sanjiu stared at Derik, but of course she wouldn't say anything. She was trying her best to figure out what other possible moves she could make.

"However, all abilities have their limitation. The refining process of my ability does not occur naturally, it requires a few rounds of attacks and filters. I'm not happy about it either," Derik smacked his lips, "But, thankfully, my deception worked. HAHA!"

Lin Sanjiu's facial muscles scrunched up and created a rather

unpleasant expression.

"Come. You can become a member of my House of Refinery. When you die, everything of yours, including your ability, your skills, and combat experience will become a part of me... Doesn't that sound good?"

While he spoke, Derik's body gradually transformed into a gaseous state. His body started to slowly drift apart, starting from his shoulders. He quickly reached the area near Lin Sanjiu's leg bones.

"Is it corrosive? Is it a poison gas? Or something else?" Lin Sanjiu guessed quietly as she immediately flew backward with her higher consciousness body. However, it was impossible to avoid the gas with such simple dodging.

Lin Sanjiu watched as the gas diffused quickly. It took just a little over ten seconds for it to fill up the lobby. Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling a little hard-pressed as she activated her [Defence Forcefield]. She decided to take on the attack directly, using her higher consciousness. Unexpectedly, when the gas touched her body, she felt nothing.

Not even a single strand of her higher consciousness was affected and they continued flowing as usual. It was as if the smoke didn't exist. If it wasn't for Derik's savage laughter which continued reverberating through the same, Lin Sanjiu would have believed that the gas was just dry ice used before a performance.

"Is he going to use his ultimate ability much later?" she thought cautiously.

However, after some time, she was perfectly fine even though the smoke grew so thick that it starting affecting her vision. In fact, after fighting non-stop for such a long time, Lin Sanjiu was quite pleased that she suddenly had the opportunity to just rest and do nothing in mid-air.

The red humanoid floated in midair, waving her hands through the smoke every now and then. An expression of faint puzzlement appeared on that person's skinless face. When Derik noticed that, he stopped laughing abruptly.

"Huh?" the voice in the smoke sounded rather astonished. "It had already been quite a few minutes..."

Lin Sanjiu looked up at the smoke around her. She raised eight fingers, indicating to Derik that it had been eight minutes.

Not only was she unharmed, but she had even deactivated her [Defence Forcefield] to conserve her strength.

"This can't be it! Don't tell me you don't need oxygen?" Derik raised his volume. He seemed to be offended by Lin Sanjiu's leisurely attitude, "Even if there are posthumans with special physiques, no one can survive five minutes without breathing—" Then, he couldn't continue speaking.

The red skinless person held her stomach, her shoulders started trembling and her head faced upward. If she could actually make a sound, she would literally be "laughing out loud".

"No wonder I am alright! So this smoke reduces the oxygen in the air!" In her mind, Lin Sanjiu was already crying from laughing too much, "He made such an exaggerated display, it scared me..."

Mrs. Manas also couldn't stop laughing. Suddenly relaxing from being overly tensed, they laughed for a very long time.

"Ah, I hope this isn't the only technique he has..." Lin Sanjiu took some time to finally stop laughing. She had not finished her sentence when she saw the smoke retreating quickly. The smoke finally concentrated on a single point and coalesced to recreate Derik's body.

The LP's face was very red and his expression was grim. Anyone could see that he was very angry as his trump card, which no human could escape from, had been ridiculed and laughed at.

"I think you jinxed yourself again..." Mrs. Manas mumbled.

Derik let out a malicious laugh. He opened his mouth and showed half a row of teeth.

"So, you don't need to breathe... Then, you can try this ability.

"[Mankind's Bane]"

Chapter 241: Mankind's Bane

A bowl-sized black shadow swooshed out from the darkness and flew toward Lin Sanjiu at tremendous speed. Lin Sanjiu stooped down in awkwardly, barely managing to dodge it. The black shadow suddenly turned back and chased closely behind her.

Not far from her was a monolith made of close to a hundred human faces, who were all staring at Lin Sanjiu. She knew that if she continued dodging she would soon be pushed to the vicinity of that human face monolith. With no better options, she opened her palms and headed straight for the black shadow. She grabbed the shadow and balled up her fist. The black shadow suddenly melted like snow in the sun.

In the end, Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness was stronger than that thing if she really used her higher consciousness to deal with it directly. However, Lin Sanjiu was really against doing that unless she had no choice, because the costs were too large.

Lin Sanjiu hissed with pain and let out some agonizing sounds, like a wounded beast. Her voice could torture Mrs. Manas, who was trying her best to see if she could help Lin Sanjiu. "Be careful! Don't touch them, okay? Let's think of something else!" Mrs. Manas said anxiously.

After that bowl-sized human face disappeared for a few seconds, the red skinless humanoid curled like a shrimp, holding her wrist. She couldn't move at all. The hand she used to grab the black shadow had disappeared, bones, muscles and all.

The cost of a single attack was a palm-sized amount of higher consciousness. If that wasn't bad enough, the worst thing about attacking that black shadow was the unbearable pain that Lin Sanjiu received. After going through a few apocalyptic worlds, and struggling to survive for two to three years, even after she had evolved, her awareness of pain, which is used as a warning for

survival, increased. Along with it, her resistance to pain had also greatly increased.

Right now, if Lin Sanjiu were to lose her arm, she could still stand up and fight. Yet, the moment she touched the black shadow, she was in such pain that she struggled to form even a sentence in her mind. She just continued hissing in pain, as if she was about to die.

"Hahaha. Didn't I warn you? Don't touch it. Come over here obediently and let me give you a quick death," Derik voice escaped from the monolith of faces. The mouths opened and closed at the same time; the voices were almost like a choir, "If I have to nibble you slowly to death, it will hurt a lot!"

"Come here!" the multiple faces urged gently at the same time.

Lin Sanjiu could see each of their faces clearly, and they seemed almost alive. Some of them looked a little familiar, while others were totally foreign. A large number of them were male faces, though there were also a few female. They didn't have necks and their faces seemed to grow out from the monolith made of flesh. They covered the monolith like mushrooms on an old tree after the rain.

[Mankind's Bane]

Humans create "sin" from when they are able to walk. Sin is a unique aspect of human nature. Humans are the best breeding grounds for more sins. This ability makes the target feel the sins created by human over the long course of human history. The pain inflicted far exceeds the most lethal poison in the world. Because human sin is boundless and unredeemable, Mankind's Bane is also an incredibly terrifying ability that is hopeless to escape from.

As it is too lethal, the ability would destroy the very part of the target's body which comes in contact with it before it can even circulate around the target's body. However, the greatest nightmare is the amount of pain it inflicts as a side effect. As if

people who had ended their own lives after experiencing the evilness in the world, many targets—regardless how high their levels were—who were inflicted by this ability chose to end their lives than endure the pain for another second.

Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness moved rapidly, trying to remove the toxin from the ability from the entire whole of her higher consciousness form. They moved so fast that they could almost create smoke. After the red, skinless humanoid curled herself for a long time, the pain finally ebbed and she slowly straightened her body.

At that point, her "body" only consisted of her upper body. Lin Sanjiu had used the remaining bit of her femur to create a hand. After "standing up", she raised her head as if to take a deep breath. Then, she prepared herself for battle once more.

The monolith of human faces stared at her without saying a word. The monolith moved very slowly, it was so slow that Lin Sanjiu could evade it even if she was walking. Its attack range was only a small area around itself. Therefore, Derik would release a human face to attack his enemy each time he activated this very powerful [Mankind's Bane].

Unfortunately, the more powerful an ability was, the more restrictions it had. Derik could only release one human face every one minute. Though this was quite a significant limitation, most of his enemies would crawl to the monolith, struggling, crying and begging for death before he even needed to release a second face. However, the enemy before him was unexpectedly hard to deal with.

He had already released four faces.

At the start, each of the faces would chase the red humanoid without fail, however, Derik almost gasped with shock each time the faces, he thought were indestructible, were destroyed by that thing. Logically speaking, if a person touches [Mankind's Bane]

four times, that person would have killed themselves. Oddly, it seemed as though the red humanoid was actually slowly recovering.

"What the hell is it?" Derik thought to himself. He had already killed 27 posthumans ever since he arrived in this world. This was the first time he felt a faint sense of regret.

"It can't continue like this," Lin Sanjiu suddenly said mildly to Mrs. Manas. "If he can release a face every one minute, I am just prolonging the time before I get killed."

"What are you planning?" Mrs. Manas felt a very bad premonition.

"I need to fight back," Lin Sanjiu's voice suddenly became very cold and controlled. This was a unique tone she used every time some big fight was about to happen.

"Sorry..." Lin Sanjiu apologized to Mrs. Manas, who didn't even had a corporeal body in her mindscape, "I'll implicate you if my attack fails..."

She did not finish her sentence.

Lin Sanjiu started channeling and using all her higher consciousness and flew toward the top of the monolith at a speed that Derik had never witnessed before. When the monolith aimed an upward attack, Lin Sanjiu split her higher consciousness into two.

Chapter 242: The Mantis Stalks the Cicada, Unaware of the Oriole Behind it

Rena felt as though her ears had been covered by a heavy layer of something. She couldn't hear anything clearly and when she touched her ears, she felt a layer of sticky blood. It was only after some time that she could faintly hear the sound of her own heavy breathing which finally managed to pierce through that layer.

The faint star in the sky was still in the same spot. It had not faded and she could still see it through the gap between the debris. Rena struggled and pushed away the concrete slab that was over her.

There was a sharp, broken steel reinforcement bar sticking out from that concrete slab. If it was a few inches closer, it would have stabbed into her face. Rena gasped for air as she crawled out from under the debris. She mentally prepared herself, knowing that her body would collapse at any minute. However, after she walked two steps, she realized that the bleeding from her abdomen had somehow stopped.

Her white socks were in strips and were so dirty that she couldn't even tell its original color, but her calves were clean. The teenage girl regained her strength with each step, and she gradually could walk at a steady pace. Before long, she even started to jog.

Rena left the state of devastation behind her.

The floors of the four or five multistory buildings were destroyed by the blast from the twenty Ripple Spheres. As concrete and steel were blasted to bits, the buildings crashed down to the ground like a tsunami. Under normal circumstance, the two posthumans in the epicenter of the blast shouldn't survive. In fact, Hannie Huang's body had exploded after a few buildings collapsed on her body. Not even one bit of flesh which sprayed out from under the debris was larger than the nail of a little finger. She had been squished till her

body was like a mash from a juicer. On the other hand, Rena who was badly injured, survived the explosions.

Once Hannie was dead, her [Truth or Dare] ability was instantly deactivated. Rena remembered looking up and seeing the large buildings were collapsing. After that, she instinctively ran as far as she could. She vaguely remembered that when she was just about to run out of that danger zone, she was hit on the back by a concrete slab. She was knocked out and only regained consciousness just moments before. Rena knew that she wasn't unconscious for long. When she looked around, she noticed that the building that Lin Sanjiu and Derik were in had also collapsed. Her surroundings were quiet and there wasn't any sign of anyone around.

Rena was very worried right now. She sprinted like mad to the opposite of the road not far from her. After checking her surroundings, she immediately ran to lift up a manhole cover. "Clash." Rena lifted the manhole cover and threw it aside. She crouched and leaned forward, looking down in the dark waterway, then saw Reno's pale face. He was still lying in the same position. His eyes were closed and his breathing was steady.

Rena instantly let out a sigh of relief. As expected, Zhu Mingchun, who had been tasked to look for Reno, never thought that Reno was right under his nose. Rena spent some effort pulling her brother out from the waterway. Then, she carried him on her back. As Reno was about the same height as her, his feet were dragged along the ground.

"Lin Sanjiu!" Rena called out for Lin Sanjiu softly as she was afraid that it would draw the attention of other foes which could be hiding. She carried her brother and walked around the rubble, "Are you still alive? Come on, answer me—"

The teenage girl could hear the soft voice traveling far into the distance under the night skies. Shaken, she stopped. After a while, she called out again, "Lin Sanjiu..."

A concrete slab suddenly moved a little as if responding to her. Rena was shocked and quickly stopped calling. "Is it you?" she took two cautious steps forward.

"I see, so that thing was Lin Sanjiu!" A sharp but hoarse voice pierced the silence. The concrete slab was tossed aside with a thud. Derik, with his short stature, crawled out from under the concrete slab. He began shouting crazily, "The Puppeteer's, the puppeteer's reward! Here... here... I come!"

Under the faint light from the dark skies above, Rena saw Derik's body and couldn't help letting out a gasp. There was no way anyone would recognize Derik as a human. Derik looked as if someone had ground his body on a millstone over a hundred times. He did not have a differentiable "front" or "back", as his whole body was just a cylindrical mass of flesh. His face, his skin, and body features had all disappeared—it was weird that he could even speak.

When Derik was just about to rush to Rena's side like a madman, a loud noise suddenly rang out from the rubble behind him. Another black shadow, not much larger than Derik, flew out. In a split second, Derik fell to the ground while he choked on his blood with gurgling sounds.

The black shadow stopped. It was a white, translucent, half side of a skull.

"That's great! You're still alive!" Rena started half-sobbing. She went up and tried to hug Lin Sanjiu, but her arms passed through the skull. She immediately froze.

"It's alright, I just need to rest for a few days," the skull wrote with some effort. Lin Sanjiu felt fully exhausted. She wanted to close her eyes and not care about anything. She would have long fainted from pain if she still had her actual body when she charged at Derik. The pain that [Mankind's Bane] inflicted on its target was like a boundless black hole in space. It was like an endless abyss,

the unimaginable torture was enough to make someone feel that "suicide" was a beautiful liberation.

However, Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness body did not possess the defensive mechanism to faint.

Even though Lin Sanjiu could attack Derik as a result, it also meant that she had to endure the pain of over countless years of agony from his ability. After she wrapped the entire human-faced monolith, she didn't take much time squeezing and grinding it. It only took 4.7 seconds, but that was Lin Sanjiu's longest, darkest and scariest 4.7 seconds of her life.

"Alright. Alright. Can you still move?" Rena wiped her tears. "We will find a place to rest now..."

Even though Rena did not know how Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness worked, she knew that Lin Sanjiu was in a bad condition. Even when Lin Sanjiu was just a brain, her form had never been so white and so ethereal. It was as if she was just a column of smoke that would disappear into the air once the wind blew.

As Lin Sanjiu used too much of her higher consciousness, she had already converted and used up the amount which maintained Mrs. Manas into her attack. "After I rest for a few days, I think she will come out again..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself tiredly. She slowly landed on Rena's shoulders and felt like she had used up all her energy.

"Should we go back to the train?" Rena asked quietly. Ever since they came to Kisaragi Station, their time in the train was the safest, so she couldn't help thinking about it. "We can't stay here too long, Zhu Mingchun is still nearby..."

"Are you looking for me?" They suddenly heard a gruff voice. "I've been behind you guys all this time."

Chapter 243: What's With Those Numbers

"Run!" When Lin Sanjiu wrote that word, Rena had also thought of the same thing. Among the three of them, two of them were badly wounded, and so the only one who had some strength to fight was Rena. However, she had already used up all her Ripple Spheres, which were supposed to be her trump card.

As the girl was a Growth-type, her combat ability wasn't very strong to begin with. Right now, she had to take care of her brother and Lin Sanjiu. Furthermore, she didn't know what was the number on her body. The probability of her winning a fight with Zhu Mingchun, who was in perfect combat condition, was too low. Rena made her mind up, she tightened her grip on her brother's arms and ran without even looking back.

"Do you all think that you can run away from me?" A wild laughter rang out behind Rena. "You're too naive. Since fate had intended for you guys to get rid of Derik and Hannie, it means that I am destined to be the big winner here!"

Zhu Mingchun was obviously so pleased with the turn of events that he didn't think too much. As he ran after them, he laughed happily. His loud laughter scared Rena so much that she ran like a lamb that was chased by a hound.

Even though Rena wasn't slow, she was carrying a person on her shoulders and she wasn't wearing any shoes. She had used all the strength she could muster to run, but the distance between them and Zhu Mingchun gradually shrunk.

Rena knew that if she continued running, he would catch up with them eventually. Her anxiety drove her out of her wits. Just as she hesitated over whether she should just stop and fight to the death with that man, the skull on her shoulder suddenly rose. The skull turned and flew in the opposite direction.

"She's almost half dead, does she still want to fight?" Worried,

Rena stopped before she could even consider her options. She placed her brother on the ground and turned to run toward Lin Sanjiu.

Lin Sanjiu heard a sound behind her. When she turned to look, she was furious. She thought that her plan should be easily understood when she turned back. She wanted to give the siblings more time to escape. With her higher consciousness form, she could always fly up into the sky if she couldn't hold that man back. Presumably, Zhu Mingchun probably didn't have any sort of Special Item to chase after her.

However, she didn't expect that Rena would foolishly turn back for her just because she didn't spell out the entire plan. It was such a wasted opportunity. She really hated that she didn't have a mouth right now!

"That's right." Zhu Mingchun lowered his face creepily, a cold glint flashed across his eyes. Clearly, he was different from his companion, Hannie. He didn't like to play any cat and mouse games. He bent slightly and rushed over without saying a word.

Zhu Mingchun was a physical combatant. His abilities were all skewed for physical combat. Before he got close, Lin Sanjiu already noticed his arms turning silver at a very fast speed. Under the dark sky, they seemed to have a metallic sheen.

Before Zhu Mingchun's punch reached Rena, it had already created a draft of air. If Rena was hit by that punch, she would definitely be badly hurt. Lin Sanjiu gathered the little amount of higher consciousness she had and swooshed up to his face, taking advantage of her size. Meanwhile, Rena had already taken out her fly-whisk. She stooped down and swiped Zhu Mingchun's legs.

Zhu Mingchun wasn't flustered by the two simultaneous attacks. He dodged the fly-whisk skillfully and threw an upper-hook with his steel-like fist at Lin Sanjiu. Considering the strength of her current higher consciousness, Lin Sanjiu did not dare to counter

the attack with force. When she condensed her higher consciousness, she was tangible. She released her higher consciousness with a 'bang' in the air. Zhu Mingchun's fist passed through Lin Sanjiu's smoke-like form. Before he could react, he suddenly jumped backward. Rena had aimed another attack at him.

After they exchanged a few blows, they created some distance between them. Lin Sanjiu and Rena looked at each other. They couldn't help feeling worried. Zhu Mingchun had not brought out his weapon. After he fought bare fist with the both of them, they knew that they couldn't deal with him. If he were to use any sort of Special Item, the situation would become worse.

"Rena had already wasted the chance to run away. Under such circumstances, we just have to fight." Just as this thought surfaced in Lin Sanjiu's mind. She saw Zhu Mingchun pulling out a war banner with his left hand.

The dark red war banner unfolded in the air. It started waving noisily in the air, even though there wasn't any victory. Zhu Mingchun chuckled and all his bones started making crackling sounds. His body grew by about ten feet, and within a short time he was huge, almost like a prehistoric creature. He suddenly had a very threatening aura.

"Oh no!" Rena couldn't help muttering.

Zhu Mingchun rolled his eyes and looked down at the girl from high above. He let out a vicious roar. His mammoth-like body moved and he smashed his huge left fist down on Rena, using half his body weight...

"You can die once first!" Zhu Mingchun's voice echoed in the dark. It was so loud that the rubble from the collapsed building vibrated.

Rena couldn't help letting out a sharp cry. Zhu Mingchun's fist was almost the size of half her body. Her leg was injured so she

couldn't dodge as fast as she usually could. As the huge fist, almost the size of a hill, loomed over her, casting its shadow, Lin Sanjiu screamed involuntarily in her heart and tried her best to rush forward—

Just then, a piece of yellowish white shadow swept past her. "Smack!" Just as Zhu Mingchun's fist was about to reach Rena, that thing hit the man's fist.

"Huh?" Lin Sanjiu watched in a daze as that shadow disappeared into the air. Zhu Mingchun's fist, which was clearly going to hit its target, suddenly hit the ground, missing Rena as if he had swerved his arm.

"Brother! You're awake!" The teenage girl who had a close shave with death rolled and crawled away. She looked up and yelled delightedly, "You used your almanac?"

Reno lay with his chest on the ground. Before the blood on the side of his mouth had dried, he had vomited another mouthful of blood. His face was so white that it was almost comparable to a duoluo zhong. He took a few breaths before he finally replied, "Yes..."

"From the looks of it, his injuries were far worse than organ trauma..." Lin Sanjiu was worried.

Then, she heard Reno speaking again, "Energies for the day make it suitable for relocation, suitable for festival feasts... unsuitable... unsuitable for fighting..."

There wasn't another almanac page more suitable than this!

Even though Reno's voice was very soft, Zhu Mingchun heard everything clearly. At first, he tried attacking them a few times, as if he refused to believe in this heresy. Yet, he realized that each time he tried to attack the two people in front of him, he would miss no matter what. On the other hand, when they attacked him, his body felt heavy and clumsy. Within less than a minute, he had

been hit quite a few times by Rena's fly-whisk. The muscles in his legs cramped up like a fried dough stick. He knew that he couldn't get anything from this even if he continued fighting.

Seeing that the situation had turned against him, Zhu Mingchun was quick to react. He grabbed his war banner and started to run. His body shrunk back to its original size as he sprinted away. Noticing that Rena was intending to check her brother's condition, Lin Sanjiu held her back and quickly wrote two words, "Catch him!"

Rena suddenly realized her mistake. She hit her head and followed the smoke-like skull. After a few leaps, she managed to hit the back of Zhu Mingchun's leg with her fly-whisk heavily. As long as Zhu Mingchun engaged in a fight, his movements would slow down significantly. His speed dropped to that of a normal person and he fell down from the impact of the fly-whisk attack without even much of a struggle.

"Tell us! What do those numbers mean!" Rena shouted as she stepped on his twisted left leg. He screamed in pain.

Chapter 244: He Won't Steal Your Heart, He'll Just Steal Your Body: Don't Mess With a Cat Demon

"I've already told you all you need to know. Seeing that I don't have a choice, could you please show me mercy?" Zhu Mingchun's trembling voice seemed to echo in Rena's mind. She bit her lip and looked at the unconscious man on the ground. She looked a little hesitant.

After Lin Sanjiu caught Zhu Mingchun off guard and knocked him out, she wrote to Rena in a half-persuasive, half-commanding attitude.

"Under this circumstances, either you'll die or he'll die. There is no alternative. If you don't have the heart to kill him now, in the future, he'll be a ticking time bomb. We don't know if he heard my name..."

Seeing Lin Sanjiu spending effort to write the long sentences, Rena finally nodded. She sighed and she bent over. Picking up Zhu Mingchun's legs, the teenage girl said in an almost sighing manner, "I know what you mean. This is indeed the best method. I am not a soft-hearted person. But, I'm going to kill an unconscious person now. This feeling... just isn't the same as killing someone in combat..."

Lin Sanjiu could understand that feeling. When she was in Hyperthermal Hell, she felt the same way when facing Chen Xiaoyuan, who was working with a duoluo zhong. From a certain angle, Rena, who was raised in the Twelve Worlds Centrum, was somewhat similar to her past self. However, she didn't know when she gradually got a little... numbed to all this.

If a person treats her as an enemy or attempts to kill her companions, Lin Sanjiu realized that she could decide whether to

kill that person in a few seconds without feeling much.

"Is this good or bad?" Lin Sanjiu "patted" Rena and consoled in words, "I told you to kill him. It's not your fault."

Zhu Mingchun must die. This was not only because he posed a great danger to Lin Sanjiu's team, but also because Rena needed the numbers on his back. Lin Sanjiu couldn't help thinking back to the moment when Rena broke Zhu Mingchun's legs. The man screamed painfully as tears rolled down his cheeks, "It's a pocket dimension. The numbers indicate that a person is in a pocket dimension!"

"What?" Rena was stunned when she heard this. She looked at Lin Sanjiu and demanded, "Give us more details!"

"It's like this..." Zhu Mingchun, who didn't think twice when he attacked others, was surprisingly susceptible to pain. He drew a breath and said, "If you use a pocket dimension sensor to scan this area, you wouldn't find anything unusual. Because, because this is still part of Kisaragi Station World. It doesn't work like other pocket dimensions which are independent spaces."

After he tried to negotiate his way out of things, Lin Sanjiu attacked his stomach, so his attitude changed and he cooperated with them.

"How is it still a pocket dimension?" Rena stared at him, puzzled.

"It's true. At first, I couldn't believe it as well... but this is a pocket dimension. It just emerges by descending upon a person! It's true. It can be proven by the numbers..." Zhu Mingchun spoke in a jumble. He switched topics very quickly and Lin Sanjiu had to patiently hear what he said before she could get the general gist of things.

According to him, each person who had entered the pocket dimension would have a number on his or her back. This wasn't a random phenomenon, but the pocket dimension was extending

throughout the various districts.

"The pocket dimension had already covered a radius of a few hundred kilometers around here. Anyone that enters this district would definitely have a number on their back," Zhu Mingchun said, full of confidence. "So... so... we looked for you guys... This was Derik's idea."

Rena ignored the man's excuses, she was only interested in learning the answer to her questions, "If that's the case, what do the numbers mean?"

Zhu Mingchun gazed at her for a moment and hesitated before answering carefully, "It indicates how many lives you have. Each time you receive an attack that can kill you, the number on your body will drop by 1... If you have 5 on our back, you can endure 4 lethal attacks. Even if you are badly hurt, you wouldn't die if your number isn't 0. And, and—"

The skull and the teenage girl focused their full attention on him.

"And?" That part was more or less similar to Lin Sanjiu's conjecture, and therefore she was more interested in the next part of what Zhu Mingchun had to say.

"Oh, everytime your number is reduced, the number on the back of your attacker would increase by one," Zhu Mingchun stammered. However, Lin Sanjiu had a bugging feeling that those words weren't what he wanted to say initially.

"This explains why you people try so hard to deceive us," Rena laughed coldly.

"I'm telling you the truth. This is all Derik's idea!" Zhu Mingchun shouted pleadingly. However, his expression wasn't as eager as his voice, "If you let me go, I promise I won't cause any trouble for you guys again. Let's survive this pocket dimension harmoniously. Isn't that better?"

His words reminded Rena about something. "Hey, what are the

conditions to complete this pocket dimension?"

Zhu Mingchun paused for two seconds and replied, "It will be completed once you stay in the pocket dimension for 180 days. You might think that it is an easy task. However, the pocket dimension is affecting more and more people each day. New people appear with numbers on their back each day in this region. These never-ending stream of people may attack you, so 180 days won't be easy."

Lin Sanjiu and Rena exchanged glances. After Rena saw Lin Sanjiu simplified sentence, she turned to ask Zhu Mingchun, "In the beginning, we have 4 on our backs. Is this the same for others?"

It was only then that Zhu Mingchun withdrew his curious gaze from Lin Sanjiu. Evidently, he couldn't tell what she was, "Yes, yes! Everyone's the same!"

Before he even finished his sentence properly, Lin Sanjiu struck his carotid artery at the back of his neck without any warning. As she didn't know the exact point that would make someone faint, she struck him quite a few times, at a lightning fast speed. With the effects of the almanac page, he finally fainted.

"What—" Before Rena could finish shouting, Zhu Mingchun hand felt limp. A small metal case that he had been holding for some unknown time felt to the ground noisily. Her expression changed instantly.

Zhu Mingchun thought that no one had noticed his little actions but Lin Sanjiu had already seen what he was doing from the scanned image created by her higher consciousness.

After both of them discussed the various strange aspects of the pocket dimension they were in, Rena pulled Zhu Mingchun's legs. She attempted to pull him to Reno's side. Observing Reno's wounds, his number was probably very low. The only thing they could do now was to let him kill Zhu Mingchun so that the number

"8" on the man's back could be transferred onto Reno.

However, when the two people looked behind, they were stunned. Reno, who wasn't far from them, had fainted again. Yet, that was not what shocked them. A bicolor black-white cat, with a silk bow tie, was backing away from them, pulling Reno's feet. He was in the same position as Rena. Before they knew it, he had already dragged Reno for some distance.

The cat suddenly found himself staring at two other people. Nobody moved.

Chapter 245: Dr. Hu's Consultation Fees

"Thud." Reno's legs fell from the cat's paws. It stirred up a bit of dust. After looking around with his black eyes, the cat finally blinked as if nothing had happened.

"We meet again," the cat doctor said in a refined manner. He gave an elegant smile—perhaps it was a smile, as no one could tell the exact expression on that cat's face. As he spoke, he took one step back. "It looks like you all are pretty busy. I shall not bother you..." the black and white cat moved extremely fast. He had already retreated quite far after saying those few words. His small body was almost a distant dot...

Startled by this incident, Rena and Lin Sanjiu couldn't react even after some time. Seeing that the cat was about to slip away, Lin Sanjiu touched Rena's shoulders and wrote two large words in midair, "Chase him!"

"Ah?" Rena was still in a daze, just like when she was in the pharmacy, "The cat doctor must be busy. It'll be impolite to make him stay..."

Someone had to watch over Zhu Mingchun. Lin Sanjiu didn't have time to comment about how suspicious the cat was as it moved farther and farther away. She looked at the cat and quickly wrote, "Consultation!" After that, she rushed toward the cat doctor.

"Oh, that's right. I need the cat doctor to check on my brother!" Rena mumbled from behind, as if she found it very logical.

Felines are naturally quick animals. This cat doctor was somehow even quicker. He could run much faster than a cheetah. Even with Lin Sanjiu's flying speed, she found it very hard to catch up with him. However, after thirty seconds, the cat, which had been sprinting as if his life depended on it, suddenly fell on the ground with a "splat". His tummy rose and fell rapidly as he

panted. He looked as though he would rather die than continue running.

This is a common weakness of all felines: they have low stamina.

Lin Sanjiu landed slowly before him. She had no qualms about her decision to chase after this cat.

"Turn back," she wrote. Even though she wanted to ask the cat many questions, she knew that she could slowly get the answers from him when he went with them.

As a human, Lin Sanjiu couldn't even communicate as well as a cat right now. When she thought of this, she couldn't help having a complicated feeling. It was very obvious that the cat doctor could affect the people around him in a very curious manner. Lin Sanjiu wasn't sure if she was unaffected just because of her higher consciousness form. The black and white cat panted for some time and looked at Lin Sanjiu with its pair of watery eyes for some time. Realizing that the skull in front of him had no intention to let him go, he finally climbed up from the ground and gave her an aloof nod, "Since you are so sincere, I will have a look."

In his own drama script, he thought that anyone that heard him saying that would definitely reply with something like, "Sorry for the inconvenience, doctor." However, the skull simply stared at him coldly and did not show any sign of gratitude.

He sighed. Under Lin Sanjiu's watchful eyes, the cat returned to Reno, feeling somewhat worried.

"Doctor, you're back! We know that you're busy. We're so sorry that we have to bother you like this..." Rena said politely after she saw the black and white cat. "Would you like some tea first? Do you need to rest?"

Clearly, getting Rena to interrogate the cat wasn't very realistic.

The cat doctor coughed twice. It checked Reno from head to toe as Lin Sanjiu watched him with an overcast gaze.

"He has serious internal bleeding and the number on his back is now only 1. He is in critical condition, very critical... Ah, I mean it's not that critical," he seemed to suddenly realize something. "I mean, actually, he doesn't need a doctor."

"What does that mean?"

When the cat doctor looked behind him, he saw the skull approaching him so he quickly explained, "He is actually in critical condition. However, under these special circumstances, you can just transfer some numbers to him! Once the number on his back increase, he won't die. Naturally, his wounds will slowly recover."

"The doctor is so right," Rena commented as she nodded profusely. Lin Sanjiu really didn't know how she should tell her off.

Lin Sanjiu noticed that the cat doctor was busy trying to wake Reno up. Suddenly, she realized that something was wrong. "Do you know what the numbers are?" Lin Sanjiu wrote hurriedly.

"If these numbers are related to the pocket dimension they were in, how did the cat doctor know about it? He doesn't look like a posthuman... He doesn't seem to be like B.Rabbit, who has gained wisdom through some random occurrence." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself

"What are you?" After pondering for a moment, Lin Sanjiu changed her question.

The cat doctor extended his claw and pricked Reno's neck twice. Two drops of blood slowly oozed out and the teenager actually started to regain consciousness. He passed Reno to Rena before he turned to Lin Sanjiu and introduced himself proudly, "I'm Meowie Hu, I'm a doctor." He spoke as if it was just common sense.

Lin Sanjiu was immediately perplexed by his answer. At that moment, the cat doctor happened to turn and see Rena holding Reno's hand. She was about to hold his hand to stab Zhu Mingchun

in the neck, the cat leaped up anxiously, "You can't do that!"

Rena looked at him inquiringly.

"If you help him, it would mean that you are the one who killed that man. The numbers will be transferred to you." Meowie said sternly, "Let him do it himself. It works even if he uses a Special Item or something."

The siblings fell silent for a moment after they heard what the doctor had said. Rena threw a glance at Zhu Mingchun, who was still unconscious. She clenched her teeth and passed her fly-whisk to her brother before saying softly, "Aim it at his throat... He'll die faster."

Meowie folded his forelegs as if observing some scientific experiment. He watched closely as the fly-whisk landed heavily on Zhu Mingchun's throat. As Reno was too weak, he didn't have enough strength. Rena had to hold down Zhu Mingchun firmly while Reno hit him about eight to nine times before the man finally died.

Rena didn't know why, but it felt worse slaughtering this man like a pig than blasting Hannie to bits. All of them kept quiet for some time before the cat doctor broke the silence, "Ah, alright. He will be fine after he rests for a while."

The cat sounded high-spirited, "Well, I guess you don't need this corpse. I will reluctantly accept this as your consultation fee..." As he said this, he started dragging the corpse's legs.

Sure enough, color slowly returned to Reno's face. He also regained some energy. He had already forgotten his cat phobia and thanked the cat doctor gratuitously, "It's no problem at all. Please do take it..."

"How can you be so easily charmed!" Lin Sanjiu scolded in her mind. She rushed over and stopped Meowie. "Tell us what we want to know before you go," she wrote.

Chapter 246: Since You Asked So Earnestly, I'll Show You Pity And Answer You

The siblings stated their objections in unison. Lin Sanjiu forcefully overruled them and got the cat doctor to stay. She had too many questions she needed answers to. While Lin Sanjiu organized her thought and deliberated over how she should start her questioning, the siblings apologized to the cat doctor profusely. They even tried to look for a good, leveled resting spot. They wanted to clean the spot with their sleeves and invite the cat to sit. When Lin Sanjiu looked up again and was about to write her questions, she found Meowie Hu lying on a cushion in a dignified manner. The cushion was on a rock and a cup of hot steaming tea was by his side.

Actually, the 'cushion' was just a piece of rag and the tea was just water. Yet, Lin Sanjiu was truly astonished by Meowie Hu's ability to charm humans. Not counting herself, even when Reno was badly hurt, his sister didn't even consider getting something soft to let him lay on. The siblings sat straight and properly by his side, as if they were afraid that Lin Sanjiu might ask the cat an offensive question. Unfortunately, they were quite distressed when they found out that Lin Sanjiu's first question was already very offensive.

"What are you exactly?" she spelled in the air.

"Did I already answer you? I am a doctor." The cat looked as if he was hiding his disgruntled face, "Haven't I shown you my incredible medical skills? Why won't you believe me?"

Similarly, the siblings showed her a "what-are-you-doing?" expression.

"I've never met such a boastful cat before. I'm not going to judge his medical skill at the moment..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself and wrote, "If you are a cat, how did you become a doctor?"

Meowie Hu nodded and answered proudly, "By learning."

Lin Sanjiu was about to explode.

Seeing that the cat wasn't about to answer her questions properly, she changed her question, "Do you know about these numbers?"

All along she had the inkling that Zhu Mingchun wasn't telling them the whole truth, so she wanted to use this opportunity to just confirm her doubts.

"Yes. I came here to collect corps—patients precisely because I know." The cat doctor displayed his elegant demeanor and answered truthfully without further probing, "A person can transfer another person's numbers to their bodies through combat. I think you know this. Next, you all must spend 180 days in the pocket dimension. Oh, you know this too? Oh, you know quite a lot... Do all of you know how much longer you can live?"

The three people froze on the spot.

"What do you mean how much longer you can live?" Just when the siblings were cautiously going to ask the cat doctor about this, the cat narrowed its eyes as if he instantly understood their intentions, "So, this is what you don't know. The numbers represent the number of days you can live."

"What? Don't they represent how many lives I have?" Rena was startled, "Doctor, previously, I only survived those lethal attacks because..."

Before Rena could finish her sentence, the cat doctor interrupted her after waving his paw dismissively.

"That's right. Every time you receive a lethal blow, the number on your back will drop by 1. Meanwhile," the cat squinted his eyes and licked his paws, continuing, "Every day, that number would also naturally decrease by 1. Once you use up the numbers, you're dead. Why do you think these people attacked you? If that was the

case, nobody would fight. Everyone could just survive peacefully for 180 days with the original 5 on their backs."

"The starting number is 5!"

When they found those numbers on their back, the number was already 4 because a day had passed. The three of them were so shocked that they couldn't say a word. After some time, Rena suddenly became aware of something. She quickly tried to look at the number on her back, "What is... what is my number now?"

Lin Sanjiu quickly checked her own higher consciousness as well.

Even though each of them had killed one enemy and gained their numbers, there was a large disparity between their numbers. Among the three of them, Lin Sanjiu had the highest number. Due to the tenacity of her higher consciousness, she didn't really receive any lethal attacks. As Derik's number was 11, Lin Sanjiu's number was now 15.

That is to say, even if she didn't do anything, she could still survive for half a month without fretting. Reno had the second highest number. After getting Zhu Mingchun's number, he was already at 9.

Rena had the lowest number. Logically speaking, Hannie Huang's number should be very high—at least it should be above 10. However, when Rena threw all her Ripple Spheres, Hannie's number was used up immediately. At the same time, they were also added to Rena. However, the explosions were still ongoing at that point. The detonation waves were strong enough to kill Rena several times over. As a result, she spent many of the lives she had gotten and was now left with 3.

When Rena found out the number on her back, she turned pale.

Many people have questioned themselves or others about what they would do if they had only three days left to live. However, when it becomes a reality, it isn't something that everyone can

accept. Luckily, there were still ways to solve this.

"So... I have been in this area for quite a few days. I have seen a sort of fighting strategies," Meowie said slowly. "There are those who form teams and eventually backstab their comrades. There are others who lure and trick newcomers; they hide the truth about the numbers and kill them silently. There are people who would use surprise attacks. They would suddenly rush out, attack you and then run away, though that is quite difficult and you only get 1 each time. There are also those who would ambush victims, set traps, etc. There are just countless methods."

Even though they could feel the bloodlust and cruelty from the actions the cat described, the cat's voice did not show any emotions. He still used that slightly lazy, elegant tone. If one had to really describe it, it sounded like he was slightly annoyed by humans' stupidity.

"Is attacking others the only way we can gain numbers?" Reno asked urgently, he had a ghastly expression.

If everybody's number drop by 1 each day, the combined value of the numbers on everybody's backs would constantly be dropping. Under such extreme circumstances, one would have to kill a heap load of people to survive 180 days.

On top of that, as time went by, there was another possibility: the combined value of numbers on the survivors may not even add up to 180. In that case, death was certain for almost everyone in the pocket dimension.

While two pairs of eyes and two sockets from a skull stared at the cat doctor, he groomed his fur unhurriedly. As his audience was getting a little anxious, he spoke leisurely, "Actually... there are other ways."

Chapter 247: Cat Doctor's Instructions

"If Reno was dragged away by that cat doctor, what would happen to him?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself as she saw the cat doctor off and turned to look at the siblings who hadn't regained their sobriety. In the end, she still didn't get to the bottom of what the cat doctor was. Compared to the size of the black and white cat, Zhu Mingchun's body seemed too large for it. When Meowie started dragging the corpse away laboriously, he couldn't even be seen because of the man's two big feet. At first glance, it was as if a corpse was crawling on the ground. It made them a little worried whether the cat doctor could even successfully go back to his hospital.

"I have an office nearby," the cat doctor had rejected their help graciously before he left. "I brought quite a few dissec— medical instruments over, so it is quite a well-equipped. It isn't far, so you don't have to come with me." Obviously, he was directing his words at the siblings.

"Thank you, doctor. If we pass by, we will definitely visit you." When Reno spoke with Meowie, he seemed to be influenced by the cat's gentleman demeanor and so he started speaking very politely, "Are you lacking anything? We can bring you something as a sign of gratitude for the consultation if we meet again."

Under the dark sky, the cat's eyes appeared to be a deep, dark green. The cat doctor's eyes lit up. He immediately nodded happily, "Since you offered, I would graciously accept it. If it is possible, I hope you can bring me some badly injured people or seriously ill people..."

"What do you plan to do with them!" Maybe she might have overthought things but Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling a chill running through her body, even though she didn't really have one. She quickly flew forward and interrupted the farewell between the cat and the siblings. However, the siblings have already accepted

the cat doctor's request eagerly. Meowie bade them farewell with a satisfied expression and continued dragging the corpse by its feet. While the corpse made scraping sounds across the ground, the cat headed slowly toward north.

Even though the cat doctor was very strange, and was actually coerced by Lin Sanjiu, he certainly helped them a lot. The three of them looked at each other and suddenly burst out laughing because they all looked pathetic.

Among them, Rena looked the worst. The wounds she received were enough for her to die ten times over. She tore her wounds when she continued fighting with Hannie. Below the point of her chest, her dress had been soaked with blood. The soaked dark-red dress hung from her body. The cat doctor gave her some simple wound treatment and wrapped a clean cloth around her stomach. With that, she avoided the scary warning from the cat doctor, "If you aren't careful, your intestines might fall out."

After Reno coughed up a few mouthfuls of blood, he could now walk slowly. Lin Sanjiu had used up too much of her higher consciousness, but she only needed some time to recover, so it wasn't a big problem. After they had a short discussion, they decided to leave this place far behind them and find a place to rest and recover.

"I wonder if that cannonball man that attacked us was killed by the explosion," Rena looked behind her at the collapsed buildings, which lay in ruins, "He didn't even appear all this time."

"If he's not dead, he probably ran away," Reno muttered somewhat furiously. "He better not let me see him again!"

They chatted and supported each other as they walked slowly. Meanwhile, Lin Sanjiu also scanned and monitored their surroundings with her higher consciousness. It wasn't an easy journey.

The explosion and the collapsed building might have alerted the

people or duoluozhongs around. Scanning with her higher consciousness, Lin Sanjiu spotted a few fleeting black shadows every now and then. They were currently weak and injured and were very easy targets for others, so they really could not afford getting seen by other posthumans. Consequently, when Lin Sanjiu spotted anything that seemed human, they would quickly move away to avoid meeting him or her. To ensure that she could spot other people in time, Lin Sanjiu used her maximum scanning range.

Throughout their journey, they avoided quite a few groups of posthumans that were heading for the collapsed bank building, some that were patrolling their territories, and others who were seeking out targets to kill. Finally, they found a secluded place which had no one within a one-kilometer radius.

"This seems to be a shopping lane," Rena looked around. "Look, there is even a luxury goods store."

Even though the street had lost its previous crowds and vibrancy, there were still many traces of how it was before. There was a bubble tea shop with a "Second cup, half-price" sign. There was a stall selling cheese fishball. There was a leather store that had a killer clearance sale. There were all kinds of shops and stalls along the street. As their doors were not closed, they gave the false impression that they were still operating under the dark skies of the night. Bamboo skewers and drink bottles littered the ground. They even spotted a "Please give me 6 dollars to go home" in chalk scribbled on the floor at one of the corners. Walking along this street that seemed to be filled with everything so familiar to her in her home world, in a place with so many signs of modern human civilization, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling distracted. For a moment, it was as if her countless brushes with death had just been a dream.

When they walked past a clothes store, Lin Sanjiu even went in and browsed for a few sets of clothes. After that, she converted

them to cards and brought them along. Rena had to change her clothes because her dress was ruined. Lin Sanjiu also had to prepare some clothes as the organs and muscles on her upper body was almost complete. She knew that once her skin developed, she would need to wear clothes.

"Let's avoid using a restaurant as our resting place," Reno said as he tried very hard to avert his gaze from a sign which wrote, "Mega-sized, juicy Osaka beef cheeseburger!" This food from the normal worlds had a special allure to the kids. "I'm scared that I wouldn't be able to resist eating food from this world."

"There is a department store just up ahead," Lin Sanjiu wrote. "Let's go there."

"Okay," Rena replied quickly. "But, I wonder where are those buildings that the cat doctor mentioned, those we can earn 1 lives from."

When Rena brought up the cat doctor, Reno's face turned pale, as if he suddenly remembered what had happened before. It was as if he suddenly realized that the cat doctor was a cat. He tried to calm himself before he finally spoke with lingering fear, "Yes, yes. Let's go and earn lives... But then again, can we trust what that cat say..."

"He is probably way more trustworthy than humans," Lin Sanjiu thought to herself but did not write it out.

According to Meowie Hu, some of the buildings within the area affected by the pocket dimension had mutated. They held a sort of "mini pocket dimension" and fulfilling the requirements there would net them about 5 to 40 lives.

The cat had overheard the conversation of two people who had come out from a building but did not actually enter one before, so he could only tell them that much.

"Ah, we're here." Rena walked behind Lin Sanjiu. When she was

at the door of the department store, she commented, "It's quite beautiful."

Chapter 248: 30%

A department store wasn't exactly the most ideal resting spot for them as it was large and there were about five entrances. If someone were to sneak in, they might not notice immediately. However, with their injuries and exhaustion, they didn't really give it much thought. After resting for a little while, Lin Sanjiu allowed Rena to stay on the second floor, where beds used to be for sale, while she went up to the third floor with Reno. They checked the entire department store and got rid of the few duoluozhongs hiding in the corners of the toilets. After that, they blocked the entrances with cabinets and shelves, leaving only one side entrance opened for themselves to enter and exit. They tied a thin thread with a bell across that entrance and it was around the height of a person's ankle.

Even though that seemed primitive, the siblings have lost all their alarm system equipment in the residential building. They had no choice but to resort to this method which could at least work on stupid people. In the bed and beddings section, the department store only had display beds that they could roll about in. More importantly, they were pleasantly surprised to find that the backup generator was functioning properly. Even though Kisaragi Station World had water and electricity, they were not very stable and often stopped working. For example, this area affected by the pocket dimension had frequent blackouts. With the backup generator, at least, they knew that they would not need to be in constant darkness. However, they didn't dare to switch on the lights now.

"After we recover, we can switch on all the lights here," Reno touched the light switch and said a little regretfully. "I want to see what kinds of people it will attract! If they dare to make trouble, they can forget about leaving!"

During the entire situation with Derik, he was mostly

unconscious due to his wounds, so he left all the fighting to his sister and Lin Sanjiu. His sister nearly died because of that. This perhaps explained the stifling feeling the teenage boy felt. It gradually grew into a sort of grudge, making him eager to recover quickly and have a proper fight.

After resting for a few hours, Lin Sanjiu gradually recovered some of her higher consciousness. Her bones slowly reappeared and there were faint outlines of her pelvis. She sighed inwardly without saying a word when she heard Reno mentioning it.

They could only rest here for a night, but when the number on Rena's back changed to 2, they would need to look for that sort of mutated building that the cat doctor had described. In that case, Reno probably wouldn't have a chance to fight anyone here. After they finished checking the department store, both of they went back upstairs. The siblings ate a little of the yellowish-green food they had brought with them very hastily before quickly sleeping in their beds. While they slept, the kids looked very weak and tired.

Lin Sanjiu did not need to sleep, so she concentrated on recovering her higher consciousness. After every 30 minutes, she would stop and scan the entire department store with her higher consciousness. After she had checked the department store for about eight to nine times, the skies outside gradually turned a light-navy. A beam of white light appeared on the eastern horizon.

Within this time, Lin Sanjiu's entire skeletal structure had been reconstructed. There was also red flesh and muscles on her face and neck. After a few rounds of 'usage and recovery', the growth rate of Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness was way faster than before. She estimated that she would only need another day to fully develop all the muscles and flesh on her body. She pulled out the clothes she had previously got from the clothes store and wore a T-shirt and a pair of shorts. As her lower body was just bones, it took Lin Sanjiu quite some effort to secure the shorts to her pelvis bones using a belt.

"It feels a little weird to wear clothes again..."

Lin Sanjiu let the siblings sleep for another few hours. When she saw that it was about time, she woke the kids up. Even though she had spent a significant amount of time with them, the two kids still had the same reaction when they saw a skinless face in front of their drowsy eyes.

Lin Sanjiu dodged two attacks with some difficulties, and the muscles on her face moved to show an unhappy expression.

"Oh, but you can't really blame us..." Rena said a little guiltily as she followed behind Lin Sanjiu. After resting for one night, Rena looked visibly more energetic, "I think that seeing you as a skull is better than your current face."

Reno avoided the white thread with the bell and laughed, "You should grow out some skin quickly. Let us see how you look! Your eye sockets are pretty large, so your eyes shouldn't be small..."

Lin Sanjiu was so entertained by them that wasn't angry anymore.

Thankfully, after they left the department store, the kids immediately became vigilant. After all, they didn't know if anyone was waiting to ambush in the darkness, treating them like preys. According to the cat doctor, the exterior facades of mutated buildings did not look any different from the usual buildings, so one had to enter a building to know if it was different.

Due to this, they needed quite a significant amount of time. There were all sorts of large and small buildings along the shopping lane, as far as their eyes could see. Since there was a chance that it could be any of these buildings, they couldn't miss out checking even a single one. Two hours had passed when they finished checking all the buildings. It was now 5 pm and they only had little more than six hours to 12 am. After midnight, the number on Rena's back would drop to 1.

Lin Sanjiu looked at the siblings and realized that their expressions had turned grim. After thinking for a moment, she took out a piece of paper and consoled them, "Let's walk out of this shopping lane and try walking in that direction."

After she had gotten some paper and pencil from a luxury good store, it was much easier for her to communicate. The siblings nodded, looking a little panicky.

The direction that Lin Sanjiu was referring to was an area covered with trees and grass. Through the greenery, they could only catch a glimpse of a building which seemed rather large. When they walked out of the shopping lane, they crossed a few roads and finally saw the building in its entirety.

"Ah, it is a library!" Rena said, sounding surprised when she saw the building. "There are no libraries in Twelve Worlds Centrum. I wanted to see one long ago. So, it is this big!"

Even compared to the normal worlds, the library before them was large and grand. From its exterior, the building had four wings. Each of the wings was two stories tall. There was an elegant large central hall in the center. After climbing up a stairway of about seven meters, the team pushed open the heavy glass doors of the library.

The siblings' heart raced for a second but they quickly became disappointed. After standing at the entrance for some time, looking into the quiet, dim library, they did not notice anything unusual.

"I think this isn't..." Reno mumbled and turned to pull the door, however, the door no longer budged.

"Are you here to borrow some books?" a mechanical voice suddenly rang out, breaking the silence.

Chapter 249: Kisaragi Library

When they first entered the library, there definitely wasn't a person in the central hall. They looked at each other and clenched their fists a little nervously as they took a few steps forward. The central hall of the library was huge. The arched ceiling hung high above their heads as it was not segregated into two floors. The light from the setting sun barely lit the dim central hall which was divided into a few vague sections. On their left side, about six meters away, there were rows and rows of bookshelves. Each of the bookshelves was about three meters tall, and as the light could barely reach that spot, it was dark.

There was a computer section near the glass windows a little further inside. Light reflected off the black monitor screens of the computers. The sound came from the administration section just in front of the computer section.

"Are you here to borrow some books?" the voice asked again. This was followed by the sound of a chair shifting. A head popped up from behind the dim light of the administration section. They saw a pale-looking woman with mediocre looks. She was wearing a light-blue woolen cardigan sweater, and a pair of gold-rimmed spectacles hung from her beck.

"Is it a... a duoluo zhong?" Rena was a little uncertain. She hoped, more than anyone else here, that this was a mutated building. However, she was also afraid that they would be disappointed once more. "Doesn't this duoluo zhong look a little too nerdy?"

The librarian obviously heard Rena's comment, but it did not evoke a single change in her expression. The woman's voice was still monotonous; it was as if she had been programmed to answer the questions she received with an artificial human voice. "I am not a duoluo zhong. I am a librarian."

Lin Sanjiu had a sudden thought and quickly wrote something on

a piece of paper. She showed Reno what she had written. Reno looked away and shouted skeptically, "We are here to borrow books, so what do we do?"

"Are the three of you here together?" The female librarian seemed to only have a single expression. She spoke with a flat tone, enunciating every single word.

"Yes!" This time, Rena replied first.

"Okay, please stand here. I will explain the borrowing rules here," the female librarian sat back on her chair in the shadows after she said that. The three of them exchanged glances. If this wasn't a mutated building, the woman before them must be a very, very intelligent duoluo zhong. However, considering their current circumstances, they had to take this risk. With Lin Sanjiu leading the way, the three of them cautiously approached the desk at the administration section. However, they were not attacked, despite their suspicion even after a few seconds. The female librarian seemed busy with something on her computer and did not even look up to greet them. Instead, she just said, "Please wait a moment."

Lin Sanjiu shot a quick glance at the gold-plated nameplate and saw the name "Siri". Just when she was feeling a little confused, the female librarian suddenly stopped working and spoke to them in the same tone she used previously, "Hello. I am the librarian of this library. My name is Siri. Welcome to this library. Your team is the fourth group of guests here. Please read this information for the specific borrowing rules." As she said this, she turned her monitor screen and showed the display to the three people.

At that moment, Lin Sanjiu could more or less believe that the woman wasn't a duoluo zhong, perhaps because of her name. After extending the scanning range of her higher consciousness, she quickly looked at the screen along with the siblings.

[Notice: Borrowing in Kisaragi Library]

To provide a better reading environment for the users, our library specially created an "Open Day" event. During the Open Day, we will only allow five teams of readers to enter. The five groups of readers have a wonderful mission. They will need to find five specific books the librarian among the thousands of books in the library. Of course, this definitely isn't because the librarian had misplaced them.

The first team of readers to collect all five books and have them verified by Siri can bring the five books back home to read, and they can also each gain 25 lives as a reward. When all five teams of readers have arrived, Siri would announce the names of the books. Our library does not have any restrictions or rules regarding how the five teams of readers compete.

After Team A have verified their books with Siri, Team A would get the reward even if Team B snatch the five books from them. While searching, the numbers on the readers' back will not be used up no matter how many days have passed outside. After a team verifies all five books, the number of days spent in the library would be deducted from the readers all at the same time. For example, if the five teams spend 3 days searching for the five books, and the winner is Team A, each of the members in Team A would receive 25 lives. After subtracting 3, they each would get 22 lives. The remaining members from other teams can leave the library after 3 lives are deducted from their original number.

However, before there are all five teams, and before the search starts, the normal rate of reduction still applies. While in this library, "gaining lives by attacking" still applies. There is no limit to the amount of time you can spend to find the book.

This are all the rules. Let's jump into the sea of books enthusiastically! Because once you finish reading the rules, you can't quit!

Kisaragi Library, July 6th, 2333.

After they finished reading the rules, the three of them were in a daze. After taking some time to process what they have read, they gradually got the sense of it and their expressions soured.

"You mentioned that we are the fourth group..." Reno said with a moody face as his eyes swept their surroundings, "Then, the people before us..."

"Yes, there are three teams of readers in the library right now. They have already waited for two days," Siri said calmly.

"Why didn't you mention that earlier!" Lin Sanjiu cursed in her mind and extended her scanning range to the maximum radius. However, she didn't spot anyone, perhaps because there were too many hiding spots in this library.

When they thought about the fact that three teams of enemies were watching them, their expressions became even bleaker.

"But, according to the rules, before the next team of readers arrives, the daily reduction rate would still be the same..." Rena said with a pallid face. Before she could finish her sentence, Reno tugged her arm lightly. She immediately realized her mistake and kept quiet. If the other posthumans found out that she was an easy target, it would be bad.

Her worries were indeed justified. If the next group of posthumans didn't arrive...

Surprisingly, the next team came very quickly. After Lin Sanjiu and the siblings hid, two people pushed open the front door. One of them was someone Lin Sanjiu knew.

Chapter 250: The Five Books

Under the looming shadows of a tall bookshelf, there were three people crouching silently. They stayed motionless as they stared in Siri's direction. They stuck so close to the bookshelf that they almost seemed to have merged with it. It was difficult to even detect their breathing. They were indeed Lin Sanjiu and the siblings.

"Well, that is all the rules. You are the fifth and last team of readers today. When you reach the bookshelves, I will announce the names of the five books that you have to find." Siri's calm voice did not change even one bit despite the people in front of her. She simply spoke in an almost inorganic tone, "Now, please enter the books section."

When she said that, the three people staring from the bookshelves immediately became tense.

As they had decided very hastily, they were now hiding among the bookshelves directly facing Siri. They were less than twenty meters away from Team 5. If they walked in their direction, a close-quarters battle would be unavoidable once the book search event started.

Team 5 only consisted of a man and a woman. When the man heard those words, he turned to look at the bookshelves behind him. The faint yellow light from the waning sun peered through the window, illuminating him. As he turned, light reflected off his golden blond hair. Yet, the golden rays on his hair were not as eye-catching as the man's looks.

Silvan looked behind and smiled at Siri, "I got it. Thank you. It must be tough to work here alone."

Siri returned to her seat expressionlessly and wore her gold-rimmed spectacles.

"You don't have to be this polite to her," the woman beside him commented, sounding a little unhappy. She had dyed flax-colored hair and they couldn't see her face, "That is just a robot. She won't understand your kindness. Hurry, let's go." After that, she touched Silvan's arm lightly as if she couldn't help herself.

Silvan was very tall. When he heard what the woman said, he lowered his head and looked into her eyes. Then, he said to her gently, "Okay."

Lin Sanjiu noticed the tips of the woman's ears turning red. It took a long while before the redness faded.

"You have another five minutes. After five minutes, I will announce the names of the books." Siri said monotonously. Silvan tugged the woman once and they both ran for the staircase at the east wing of the library. Lin Sanjiu and the siblings quickly let out a sigh of relief.

"That is the guy you mentioned previously, Silvan?" Rena's voice trembled a little when she asked that question after the two people left. "You didn't tell us that he looks... looks so..." She didn't have a word to describe what she saw because "good-looking" and "handsome" just wasn't sufficient to describe even a tenth of his looks.

"Nothing bad happened to me, why would I even bring that up? Is it really that important to know if someone is good-looking?" Lin Sanjiu said critically in her mind. Even though she did find Silvan handsome, she didn't find the relevance in the matter.

However, even Reno was apparently "conquered" by Silvan's looks.

"He seems like a nice guy. I hope we don't have to fight against him," the teenage boy concluded. He seemed to have come to this conclusion just judging the man by his looks.

Lin Sanjiu was speechless. " These two kids are probably just

temporarily spellbound? " she thought to herself. After all, they were now in a life-and-death situation and she knew that they were aware of their priorities. Her mind was occupied with a fleeting question about the whereabouts of the other members of the Munition Factory for a second and then she didn't think about it much longer.

They discussed their book searching strategy for some time but they really didn't have a clue. In the end, they just exchanged information about the Special Items they had and accepted that as the end of their discussion. As Lin Sanjiu's possessions were all locked within her corpse, she was naturally the 'poorest'.

Five minutes passed quickly and Siri's voice suddenly sounded from the speakers without any warning. "I will announce the names of the five books now. The first book is A World History of Art."

Lin Sanjiu quickly scribbled the name on the paper she prepared. "The second book is A Girl's Sorrow."

The siblings stood up a little nervously when they heard this. They started scanning the books around them. "What if the books are just nearby?" they thought to themselves.

"The third book is A Detailed Guide to Forensic Reconstruction of Dinosaur Fossils."

Reno, who had started looking through the shelves of books, suddenly froze and immediately drew out a book in a fluster. When he took a closer look, he was very disappointed. The book he took was "A Sorrowful Girl."

"The fourth book is The Heart-Stealing Consort Escapes With a Baby."

Lin Sanjiu's bony fingers paused for a moment and one of her words nearly became crooked. "There is quite a variety of books in this library."

"The fifth book is How to Render: The Fundamentals of Light, Shadow and Reflectivity."

Siri spoke very quickly and when she had finished reading out that entire long title, Lin Sanjiu had only written: "How to—". She wasn't slow at remembering things but she had not heard a single English word in almost three years since she found herself in these apocalyptic worlds!

The siblings stopped all of a sudden. They looked at each other in dismay, a little stunned by the situation. They heard some disturbance from some unknown spot in the library. The noise became soft echoes from the ceilings. Apparently, the posthumans from the other teams also had the same trouble.

"What did she just say? Should we go over and ask Siri..." Before Reno finished his words, Siri's voice rang out, "The book titles would only be announced once. It will be announced again during verification."

That is to say, they had no choice but to try to remember that extraordinary long title of that English book. Lin Sanjiu tried to recall what Siri said over and over again, trying to identify the words. She did managed to grasp a few words but she really couldn't be sure if it was right.

"Regardless, don't we already have the titles of four books? Why don't we just look for the four books first?" Rena said anxiously before looking through the titles of the books on the particular shelf she had been searching.

Lin Sanjiu sighed and quietly copied the book titles for the siblings on two pieces of paper. The bookshelves were very tall and they were at least 15 meters in length. There were at least 20 shelves and every shelf was packed with books. The top of the bookshelves almost reached the ceiling.

"There are so many books..."

"Please start searching now," Siri said.

Chapter 251: Sudden Vocalization

The books in Kisaragi Library were not properly categorized by type, perhaps to make the "readers" task more challenging. When Reno saw a few "Lost Dreams of the Red Chamber", "Rural common disease prevention and treatment guidelines", "Advanced Mathematics" and all other books arranged in a jumble, he already gave up on the idea of searching the books by type.

Even though the books were not classified by types, the shelves were sorted by the 26 letters of the English alphabet. They were hiding within the "W" section, between bookshelves 27 and 28 in the many bookshelves under that letter.

At the start, none of them could fully grasp the concept of "millions of books" mentioned in the rules. Once a number is too huge, its true meaning is hard to process, making it hard for people to get a proper impression of the numbers.

They were only compelled to fully make sense of their current situation when they had finally searched the entire bookshelf 27. "How many bookshelves are there in the "W" section?" Reno asked innocently. It was a reasonable question as the three people spent more than an hour before they finished searching through bookshelf 27—and that was primarily because their speed and reaction were much faster as posthumans. There was a rough estimate of about 1500 books in bookshelf 27, and there seemed to be about the same number of books in the other shelves.

The answer to his question was actually on a "Reader's Guide" pasted at the side of the bookshelf.

They read the "Reader's Guide" quickly and their face turned pale.

"There are 100 bookshelves under each letter section? Is there something wrong with this?" Rena had the worst impression out of them, and continued muttering, "There are 26 letters, so there are

2600 bookshelves. If there are about 1500 books on each bookshelf... There are close to about 4 million books?"

She couldn't help raising the pitch of her voice as she spoke, her voice even started sounding quite ear-piercing. This was a simple arithmetic problem. Even if they don't sleep and rest. Considering that they need one hour to check a single shelf, they would need 2600 hours to check all the shelves.

That was 108 days.

Even if they included the total number of lives that everyone in the building had, it might not even come up to 108...

"No, this isn't right. There must be another way to tackle the task in this library," Reno stuttered slightly, "It goes without saying that searching through each and every shelf is the stupidest method. Let try to examine the situation and think about what other methods we could use to finish this quest."

With a pale face, Rena froze for a moment before uttering, "Rob others?"

The problem right now was that they didn't know where the other teams were, let alone if they had found the required books. Reno evidently didn't think too carefully about the situation as he was tongue-tied after hearing what Rena said. He looked down and started thinking hard.

Right now, they had too little information. Lin Sanjiu looked up and saw Siri not far from them. If they could walk over to her and ask her some questions, they might actually be able to get some clarification about their problem. However, even without thinking, she knew that the other four teams were definitely eyeing the area where the librarian was sitting at.

The central hall was square-shaped. Siri's service desk was on one side of the hall. The multimedia section was in the center and there was a working area with tables and chairs. On the other side

of the wide hall, were the bookshelves of 6 sections, from "U" to "Z". A total of 600 bookshelves, or 900,000 books, filled half the central hall.

At the corner of the square-shaped building were staircases to the north, south, east and west wings of the library respectively. As there wasn't a second floor in the central hall, someone standing on the second floor of each wing could look down and see the central hall clearly.

However, there was a limitation to what a person could 'see' from above. As the bookshelves in the central hall were very tall and because the space between each of the shelves was very small—only one man's width—, it was basically very hard for someone on the second floor to see what happened between the shelves, as the gaps between the shelves were too dark.

However, if Lin Sanjiu and the siblings were to walk out from bookshelves, they would definitely be spotted easily by the other teams. Lin Sanjiu couldn't help regretting a little. When they first came here, they didn't really observe the layout of the building as they were fully focused on the borrowing rules. Without much consideration, the three of them hid between the bookshelves in the central hall. Now that they wanted to leave this area, it seemed very difficult.

Looking for Siri or searching for the remaining four teams would mean that they would first have to expose their positions to the four enemy teams. They did not have any solutions to their current problem so they could only sigh. They started searching through bookshelf 28 somewhat dejectedly. Their previous intense drive to "do something else" was replaced with a helpless resignation to at least do something. After searching through two bookshelves in succession, nightfall came upon Kisaragi Station World.

In just an hour, the light beaming through the windows from outside had faded, and darkness enveloped the entire library. The

tall bookshelves blocked the little light from the night skies. Along with the central hall, the four wings were also embraced by darkness, as they had no windows. It was so dark that a person would even suspect that they had become blind.

"Aren't they going to switch on the lights at night?" Rena asked with a slightly trembling voice, she was a little startled by the darkness. "If it this dark, anyone who dares to even use any sort light generating device... would immediately become everyone's target, right?"

Thankfully, this situation did not continue for long in Kisaragi Library. After a few minutes, the fluorescent lights lit up with loud snapping sounds, the people in the library suddenly found themselves surrounded by light once again. Though it wasn't as bright as the day, they could at least see the things around them.

When the siblings could see the shelf in front of them again, their faces couldn't help turning bitter.

"Agh," Rena threw a cursory glance at the books around her. She tapped the bookshelf with her hand, "I am sure we can't find the book in bookshelf 29. I don't even have to look at it. The probability is just too small."

When she looked up, she found Lin Sanjiu standing stiffly on the spot, without moving at all. The woman wasn't looking at any of the books. Lin Sanjiu's muscles, organs, fats and blood vessels of her upper body were all fully developed by then. Rena got a shock when she found herself face-to-face with Lin Sanjiu.

"Do you think searching through the books one by one is a little too stupid?" Rena felt like she understood what Lin Sanjiu wanted to express, "But, we have no choice. This is our only option right now."

The siblings were very startled when the skinless person in front of them opened her jaws and suddenly they heard a sound from her mouth.

Unbeknownst to them, Lin Sanjiu's vocal cords had actually somehow developed.

"No." Her voice sounded cold and collected. Even if she was delivering bad news, others could feel a sort of strong resilience from her calm voice. The siblings were taken aback but they also couldn't help having the faint feeling that they could depend on her.

"Get ready," Lin Sanjiu said mildly. However, she could not hide the faint sense of urgency in her voice, "Someone is coming."

Chapter 252: North, South, East, West, and Central

The other teams also faced the same challenges that Lin Sanjiu's team faced. It was simply a fantasy to think that they could find five books among close to four million books just by pure manpower. Under such circumstance, the different teams developed different strategies.

Obviously, the people who arrived didn't simply want to "check if the required books were in the central hall".

"If that's the case, what is their strategy? At this point, it was impossible that anyone has already found a book. Why are they so eager to take action?"

"I am not sure which team they're from, but I am sure it is one of the three teams who arrived earlier than us," Lin Sanjiu couldn't figure out their motives. At that moment, her ability to remain calm and more cool-headed as the dangers around them mounted had never been more prominent. As her skinless jaw opened slightly, she spoke quickly and softly, "The three teams who have arrived earlier are the only groups who know that we are hiding in the central hall. Secondly, they were able to take advantage of that few minutes of darkness to move. That clearly shows that they already knew that it takes a few minutes before the lights are switched on at night. Let's not forget, the three teams ahead of us had already been waiting for 2 days! For now, I am uncertain how many members they have as I don't have a clear view of them. But, if they dare to approach us, I guess they have at least three or more members."

The fact that Lin Sanjiu could suddenly speak and the alarming information she was delivering to them gave the siblings more than a small shock. As a result, they momentarily didn't think to ask her how she knew what she knew. After a few long seconds,

Rena regained her composure and asked quietly, "Where are they? Why can't I see them?"

"They are still quite far from us. They are now near bookshelf 80 something. They have split up and are moving from two different directions toward us..." Lin Sanjiu examined the image in her higher consciousness carefully, "They are walking very slowly and stealthily. I don't think they figured out that we already discovered them."

"What should we do?" After Lin Sanjiu could speak, the siblings seemed to accept her decisions wholeheartedly.

Lin Sanjiu herself didn't expect that her higher consciousness would choose to develop a different body structure first. Her throat, vocal cords, blood vessels, windpipe, and esophagus could be seen clearly. She only understood what had happened when she heard Mrs. Mana's draggy voice saying "Ah, how exhausting."

"Let's go along with it," Lin Sanjiu focused her attention, once again, on the few vague figures creeping toward them. "Since they haven't figured us out, we can use guerrilla tactics."

"If they have around the same number of people as us, we can launch a counterattack based on the situation. If they have more people, we can try to evade them and secretly leave the central hall. But, where we should head next is also problematic."

Over the past few hours, they did not notice any sort of conflicts. This would mean that there was a very high chance that each of the five teams were hidden in the five different sections of the library, which explained why there hadn't been any confrontations yet.

If they could successfully escape from the central hall, they still didn't know which wing they should go to. Even if they avoided the east wing, where Silvan's team was, they still had to choose from three paths.

"If we know where this team, surrounding us, came from, we can go to the wing that they were originally from. It should be empty right now—" Reno added thoughtfully.

The east wing was at the upper left corner of the library; the west wing was on the lower left. The south wing was on the upper right corner and the north wing was on the lower right corner. According to the layout, the central hall was the same distance from each of the four wings. It was convenient to reach the central hall from any of the wings so they couldn't judge the direction that their enemy actually came from.

However, they knew that they didn't have much time left. Lin Sanjiu gave a quick nod to the siblings and they followed her without saying a word. They moved nimbly and soundlessly and quickly climbed to the top of the bookshelves.

The bookshelves were arranged adjacently without any gaps between them and somehow created an accessible pathway. Furthermore, since their enemies did not know that Lin Sanjiu and the siblings already discovered their presence, naturally the top of the bookshelves was their biggest blind spot.

Even though the fluorescent lights were switched on, the feeble light from them was simply insufficient to fully illuminate the place. The top of the bookshelves might be brightly lit but as the light poured down the tiers of books, it gradually grew dimmer. If a person were to crouch down between the bookshelves, they would certainly find himself/herself hidden in darkness.

This was also the reason why Lin Sanjiu shockingly discovered that the enemy team consisted of six members only when she and the siblings got close enough to them, moving stealthily along the top of the bookshelves.

The multi-tiered bookshelves certainly affected the visibility of her higher consciousness way too much!

The two people closest to them were at bookshelf 50, which was

just in front of them. They crouched as they moved one in front of the other. The other people were heading in another direction but were also approaching them quickly. As the siblings looked at Lin Sanjiu simultaneously, their expressions showed their slight cluelessness as to what they should do next. Lin Sanjiu thought for second and instantly lay flat. Then, she signaled at the siblings and they also lay flat immediately.

The two men, whose faces they couldn't really see, crouched and moved very quickly. They looked through the gaps between the tiers of books at the spot across them every now and then and appeared to be very vigilant.

Due to the numbers on everyone's back, it was impossible to kill anyone with a single attack unless a person uses explosives or something similar. It was too difficult to incapacitate two people at the same time. Furthermore, these two people had backups. If they sneaked past them quietly, they would be able to leave W section and even the central hall.

After hesitating for a moment, Lin Sanjiu shook her head at the kids.

The two attackers seemed oblivious to the people above their heads. They coordinated with each and quickly left the spot under Lin Sanjiu and the siblings and disappeared from bookshelf 50.

They had managed to avoid a confrontation.

"What should we do next?" The siblings looked at the skinless person beside them and waited for her directions.

They had two options now. The first option was to wait in the same spot until the enemy team returned to their own wing after failing to find them. This would mean they would retain a status quo. The second option was to find out which wing those people came from and sneak to that particular wing while they were distracted.

"I think we should move to another wing as soon as possible. It is a little safer. The central hall is linked to the entranceway of the four wings and we can't see the others so they can go there anytime... But, how are we supposed to find out which is their wing?" Rena asked quietly, feeling a little anxious.

"Regarding this problem, I do have some insights." Lin Sanjiu had been thinking non-stop about this matter, "Don't you find it strange? Regardless of their reasons for trying to ambush another team, why did they choose us? Why didn't they choose Silvan? We have three members, whereas there are only two members in his team. Clearly, it would be easier to attack them..."

Unless... unless... the invading team came from the side where the south wing and north wing were situated. The library was only in total darkness for a short time, and it wasn't enough for them to reach the east wing!

"Even though Kisaragi Library was very large, the library had been in full darkness for two whole minutes. That was enough for a posthuman to run across the central hall... After all, the central hall was only 500 to 700 meters long..."

"It's the north wing!" Lin Sanjiu felt a jolt through her body as she and the siblings said those words almost at the same time.

"That's right. They must be from the north wing," she said very swiftly while she organized her thoughts trying to find for a loophole in her reasoning. "The south wing is only a few hundred meters from the east wing. As each of the wings are about the same distance from the central hall, they had no reason to choose a team with more people over a team with fewer members. The north wing is situated diagonally across the east wing so it is the furthest, so they chose the opportunity to run across when it was dark..."

Just as she said this, she suddenly noticed a sudden bright light flashing across the scanned image in her mind. "Lin Sanjiu, be careful!" the siblings couldn't help calling out. Following which, a

person suddenly jumped up from below them. An arc of white light swept toward Lin Sanjiu aggressively.

Chapter 253: When a Book Falls on Your Head

"Haha! You're asking me why I attacked you?"

A man in a full black outfit laughed softly. His face was hidden by his black top hat. They could clearly hear the contempt in his voice toward Lin Sanjiu's question.

"If five teams have to vie for the same set of books, don't you think fighting is inevitable?" When the man with the top hat spoke, his white, narrow chin seemed to grow sharper. Lin Sanjiu stared at his lower jaw, his only facial feature which was exposed, and sighed inwardly. She stabilized her higher consciousness which had become chaotic after that sudden attack. She had no chance of dodging that previous unexpected attack.

It was already too late when she realized that someone was beside her. The white light was already at the tip of her nose bone. At that moment, it was impossible for her to evade the attack no matter what she did. Lin Sanjiu gritted her teeth and gathered and concentrated her higher consciousness in her face. She had just compressed her higher consciousness when she was violently hit by that light.

Her higher consciousness did not allow her to feel physical pain. Furthermore, after being mentally tortured by [Mankind's Bane], she only felt that her nose bone had been instantly erased. However, her higher consciousness was ultimately stronger than the white light so she was only pushed off the bookshelf. She floated gently to the ground.

Lin Sanjiu's attacker noticed that she appeared fine after he had attacked her directly. He saw her nose which had turned to smoke suddenly returning to its previous bone form and he was stunned for half a second. Almost as if remembering something, he yelled

out loudly, "They're here!"

The remaining five members of the enemy team were already heading in Lin Sanjiu's direction when they saw the white light. When the siblings were ready to fight, their six enemies had also gotten close to them. This time, they were truly surrounded.

As the bookshelves were arranged in vertical rows, some of the members of the enemy team were just a bookshelf away from them. Two men, with threatening glares, were standing behind them, blocking their escape route. The person who had attacked Lin Sanjiu suddenly was one of them. Meanwhile, a man with a top hat and black suit walked toward them from the bookshelves in front of them.

When Lin Sanjiu heard the man's reply, a few thoughts raced through her mind, she immediately eyed the man and muttered, "We haven't even found a single book."

"I know." Unexpectedly, the man's white narrow chin moved and he revealed a smile, "We are not here to snatch books from you."

"Then, why did you guys want to ambush us?" Rena's crisp voice rang out furiously from the top of a bookshelf.

As the space between the bookshelves was too narrow, being only one man's width, the siblings did not go down to join Lin Sanjiu but supported her from above.

The man in the top hat snapped his fingers and the other five members in his team simultaneously took out their weapons and Special Items noisily. They had a machete, a crystal ball, a feather duster, a black lightning... A sweeping glance revealed quite a terrifying sight.

"You're all so stupid," the man with the white chin and a top hat laughed again. "I have already thought of the correct strategy to deal with this situation here at Kisaragi Library. And it isn't about

finding those five books."

Startled by his answer, Lin Sanjiu was just about to question him further when the man waved his hand. The two men who had been waiting for his command immediately charged at them. Meanwhile, three other members aimed attacks at the siblings at the top of the bookshelves.

Lin Sanjiu heard a whooshing sound from her back, she stooped forward evading the machete that swept past her head. With a forward momentum, the machete instantly struck and broke the wood from one of the middle tiers in the bookshelf. Nearly a hundred books fell from the shelves like water bursting from a dam.

As the books fell to the ground with muffled thuds, the man in the top hat folded his arms and said with a clear but drawn-out voice, "The teams that came later really have a disadvantage. It isn't written in the 'notice' so you guys don't know this... When the lives of the other readers from the other teams fall to zero, the survivors can leave this place even if they couldn't find the books.

"That is to say, this library is simply a Colosseum. The way to get more lives is to attack other readers," the man's sharp, long chin moved. He let out a cold laugh, "I can't believe it. You guys, in these small teams, didn't even think of this... and you honestly tried to look for those books."

Even though she had her misgivings, Lin Sanjiu did not have the time to chat. She could barely defend herself as she had to deal with the attacks from the two men and even guard against the man with the top hat.

The noise from the fight at the W section quickly filled the library. The noise bounced off the ceiling, echoing through the library. It certainly alerted the members from the other teams as they could hear the faint voices from their discussions. Amidst the loud and intermittent shouting, Lin Sanjiu heard someone vaguely

shouting "north wing".

The white light that had attacked her previous seemed to be a white scarf-like thing. However, it was certainly not as soft as a normal scarf since it created a shallow dent on the ground each time it struck. Lin Sanjiu was flanked by attacks. She was barely keeping up. Yet, she noticed that the black shadow of the man in a top hat at the corner of her eyes. He was charging toward them—

Lamenting her bad luck silently, she wanted to leap into the air to avoid the attacks as she didn't dare to take on a direct hit. Just then, the handle of a long feather duster peeked out from one of the tiers. Lin Sanjiu was caught unprepared. She tried her best to swerve in another direction but she still touched the tip of the feather duster. For a split second, she lost control of her body and she was swept to one side.

The feather duster wasn't that powerful but Lin Sanjiu felt like she had been swept away like dust. Once she was swept aside, her body became rigid and she could not change her direction. She tried to hold on to the shelves to regain control over her body but it was futile, she only managed to pull down many books from the shelves.

Her higher consciousness body seemed to be following a planned trajectory, she was flying in the one straight rigid direction. Her three attackers, including the man in the top hat, raced toward where she was going to land as if cats who had caught the scent of a fish.

"Damn it!" Lin Sanjiu cursed inwardly. She knew that this was the effect of a Special Item. After pulling down quite a number of books in succession, she finally stopped struggling. She was sure that she would lose quite a number of lives this time!

Just then, a book from the top tier fell due to the tremor. It fell on Lin Sanjiu. When she wore her current clothes in the department store, she used a belt to secure her shorts to her pelvis

bone. The belt buckle was made of metal. When the book touched the belt buckle, it disappeared into countless white light and integrated itself into the metal buckle.

Chapter 254: Exactly 4 Million Items

Lin Sanjiu would never have imagined that the books in Kisaragi Library were all Special Items. When the book dissolved into the dots of lights, she almost felt as if her non-existent heart had leaped out of her chest. Every single item there—that was, exactly 4 million—was a Special Item!

She had to admit that her incredible luck often helped her out during the most crucial situations. When one of the bookshelves was damaged and nearly a hundred books fell out, there was a high chance that the man with the top hat and his team could discover this. However, due to the fact that a Special Item could not integrate into another Special Item, none of their enemies discovered anything even when there was a heap of books on the ground. Extraordinarily, it was Lin Sanjiu who was the first person to uncover this discovery.

Saving herself from death's door, she immediate converted the book into a card and read the description.

[The Answers to 100 Questions about Raising a Dog]

This is the 280,573rd book in Kisaragi Library Collections. Meeting the demands of people's love for their pets in today's society, the publishers have collated this reference guide to teach people how to raise a dog. It includes an introduction to the different dog breeds, prevention, and cure to common ailments, the available vaccines, and treatments, the temperaments and preference of each dog breed and other information about food and nutrition. This comprehensive book is packed with information which will guide you how to raise a dog in a safe, trouble-free, scientifically proven way. This is the first edition and there are many photos included.

PS: This book from Kisaragi Library can only be activated in Kisaragi Library. The special effect of each book can only be used

once. Thereafter, the Special Item would become a normal book.

As for its special effects, why don't you try it out yourself! When you want to activate this book, open the book, the content on the page you read would become the effect of this particular book.

"Dog Raising Guidebook? " Lin Sanjiu had just finished scanning through the words on the card with her higher consciousness when she felt a powerful gust heading her way. Regardless of her doubts toward the effect of the book, this was her only chance now!

Lin Sanjiu gritted her teeth, raised her arm to protect her head, and took a direct blow. Luckily, it was only a physical attack. Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness just vibrated a bit. She didn't receive any sort of effect from any Special Item. Before the person could withdraw the attack, Lin Sanjiu flipped open the book in her hand. She quickly scanned the page with her higher consciousness.

Her higher consciousness could only create images in her head, it could not improve her reading speed. Luckily, she had opened the book at a page with a picture.

"Rottweiler..." when that word appeared in her mind, Lin Sanjiu felt her body sinking rapidly to the ground in a strange manner. The effect of the feather duster was almost at its end. Her three attackers, who were waiting to ambush her, weren't about to miss this chance. They abruptly ramped up the frequency of their attacks, that rained down on the skinless person before them.

An oppressive, monstrous growl suddenly filled the hall, causing the ground to vibrate slightly. It was like a rumbling thunder. When Lin Sanjiu felt the ground on her back, everything went dark for a moment. A gigantic black shadow leaped over her body in a split second and pounced on the people behind her. Disturbed by the sudden huge creature which appeared from nowhere, all the attacks missed their target. Lin Sanjiu quickly grabbed the opportunity. She turned over and got up quickly, just in time to see

a giant dog, taller than a man and with black fur, biting a man's leg viciously.

Lin Sanjiu did not step forward, instead, while the three men were still distracted, she drew a book from the bookshelf beside her which was still wobbling non-stop. Even though the dog looked scary, it was just a dog. It definitely couldn't last long under the attacks from the three men. Besides, the small description under the photo stated: "Stable temperament, energetic, protective but knows restraint, this breed is not prone to aggression."

"Please give me a powerful book!" Lin Sanjiu prayed silently, even though she didn't know what qualified as "powerful".

The three men could attack her any second now, so she didn't have time to carefully choose her book. However, when she pulled out the book, she immediately felt disappointed.

"300 English Phrases for Traveling".

"This is even more useless than that Dog Raising Guidebook!" Just when she was about to throw it aside, she suddenly felt the floor shake. She looked up and saw that the large black rottweiler had received a serious blow. When it crawled up from the ground, it grew faint and then disappeared.

She had no choice.

As the three people charged toward her without saying a word, Lin Sanjiu quelled her anxiety and quickly glanced across the page. The page happened to be about asking for directions. A tourist was saying to a policeman, "Excuse me, I think I am lost."

As her eyes shifted away from the last word on the page, the man's top hat had already blocked the light above Lin Sanjiu's head, casting a shadow filled with murderous intent...

However, the black shadow suddenly glided past her. Lin Sanjiu was stunned. The man with the top hat actually just walked past her. Next, the two other men, who were just in front of her,

suddenly acted like there was something wrong with their eyes or as if they were hallucinating. One of them pointed to another bookshelf and shouted, "There!" The other acknowledged and they ran in the opposite direction.

The three men actually got "lost" within this narrow path!

Lin Sanjiu was delighted at the turn of events. She leaped and jumped into the air, swiftly charging toward the nearest man. While the man was stupidly looking at the turning corner, she strangled his neck with her arm. "Crack," the person's neck bone snapped.

The number on Lin Sanjiu's back increased to 16. When a person received a lethal injury, they would not die as they still had their lives, but they would lose their ability to fight for a period of time.

Lin Sanjiu threw the man with the broken neck on the ground while he was panting. She raced back to the siblings' location like a leopard. On her way, she grabbed another book. Using the effects of the book, she repelled the people surrounding the siblings. The person who flew the furthest was the person who was holding the feather duster. That person landed right in front of Siri's desk.

After Lin Sanjiu's quick explanation, Reno held his sister's hand and jumped down from the bookshelves. "We can use all these?" he asked, almost in disbelief, as he stared at the rows of books in front of him.

Lin Sanjiu nodded her head and immediately twisted her body to look to one side. The book's "lost" effect had already ended.

"What can you use?" the man with the top hat eyed them from one bookshelf away. He did not move and his curious voice came from under the hat. He had noticed Lin Sanjiu's strange behavior. Despite being in a very tight situation, she still browsed through a book. He had his suspicions. He stared at the book that Reno had and also drew a book from one of the bookshelves.

At that moment, there was a sudden cacophony of almost inhuman screams. It interrupted the man with the top hat just as he was about to open the book in his hands. The screams filled with agony stopped abruptly after they reverberated through the library. Lin Sanjiu scanned the area around them with her higher consciousness and realized that the person she had flung aside, the person who was holding the feather duster, had been shredded into a bloody mess. What was left of him lay in front of Siri's desk. He had been killed by some unknown perpetrator.

Chapter 255: A Progress Report from Siri

The sneak attack by the team from the north wing had backfired. After losing one of their members for no apparent reason, the morale of the north wing team had visibly lowered. After all, it wasn't that easy to kill a posthuman with additional lives. Nobody knew how powerful that attack was since it managed to, in a single instance, use up all the lives that the victim had accumulated.

When they continued fighting with Lin Sanjiu and her team, they started losing focus and accuracy. Even though Reno risked getting slashed by one of their enemies from the back, he created an opportunity for his sister to gain more lives. Finally, the number on Rena's back rose to 4. With that, Top Hat's team had already lost one member and two lives.

Worried that a third party would take advantage of the current circumstances and afraid that his members might lose more lives, he lead the team back to the north wing when he noticed an opportunity while Lin Sanjiu and her team counter-attacked. Lin Sanjiu stopped the siblings from chasing after the group and only watched coldly as the enemy team left.

"Don't forget. There might be other teams out there," she reminded the kids. She gestured at Siri's work desk with her chin. "Our team is small, so let's not stupidly provide an opening for others to attack us."

The bloodied corpse was still lying in front of Siri's work desk. The desk was situated in an open area within the central hall. Anyone from any wing could see the work desk when they looked down, so, naturally, his teammates didn't plan to collect his body from that spot.

Hearing Lin Sanjiu's advice, Rena immediately peeped out from the gaps of the bookshelves. Even though she couldn't see a thing, she couldn't help feeling nervous.

"From the looks of it, we can't go out there for the meantime—" Before she finished her sentence, she heard a raised voice from a woman.

The woman's voice suddenly echoed through the hall. "My dear friends in the central hall, you aren't hurt badly, right? Don't worry. We, people from the south wing, detest such mindless massacres. We just helped you out a little. Don't worry about it."

The three of them exchanged glances and found themselves a little loss for words.

Detest such mindless massacres? It was evident that even the woman who said those words couldn't believe her own lies. That corpse which was full proof of a "mindless massacre" was still lying on the ground without a face. However, why did the people from the south wing help them?

Oddly, the members from the south wing didn't help when the fight first broke out. They only intercepted when the fight was getting heated and people were hurt, stepping in and killing a person like a thunderbolt.

"I don't think they are trying to help us," Lin Sanjiu said calmly, "they are just grabbing an opportunity to wear down the north team. The south wing team must have arrived earlier than the north wing team. They must have noticed that the other team had six members, so they were guarding against them."

This wasn't complicated, and the siblings immediately understood what she said and nodded in agreement. "What should we do now?" Rena asked.

Lin Sanjiu paused for a moment and her lips slowly curled. Before the kids could say anything, she suddenly raised her voice and replied. Her voice was cold but clear, and certainly no one would suspect that it was a voice from a skinless person. "Thanks for helping, but we could have handled it ourselves. I am just going

to give everyone a heads up, we aren't afraid if you guys want to fight... We have already killed two people from the previous team."

The siblings were stunned. They gave it some thought and immediately got a sense of what she was doing. Strangely, the people from the north wing team remained silent, as if the top hat man, going along with her lie, concurred with his silence that there were only three members left in his team.

Lin Sanjiu did that not to help the people from the north wing team, but she just wanted to make the situation a little more confusing. The woman from the south wing team seemed to be caught off guard by that reply. Very quickly, there was only silence from the south wing.

After the library fell into an awkward silence for a few seconds, a man with a nice, gentle voice suddenly laughed. His laughter rang out through the silence and was so clear that it was almost as if he was laughing beside each person.

"Alright, since you guys stopped fighting, we are going to look for Miss Siri and ask her some questions," Silvan's brisk voice came from the second floor of the east wing, "I hope you don't mind? After all, we came here last. We hadn't even finished reading the rules and Miss Siri had already chased us up here."

The library was silent. No one replied.

Silvan whistled once and said, "I take that as your approval." Following which, everyone heard the sound of soft discussion from the east wing. After that discussion, the flax-colored hair woman sprinted down the stairs noisily.

"Why didn't he come down here himself?" Rena had just frowned her brows when she heard a extremely sharp whistling sound as something like a lightning attack shot out from the west wing. It was directed at the flax-colored hair woman. She turned her head and looked at it in horror, but she didn't attempt to evade it. The next second, everyone understood Silvan's decision.

"Peach, you have to be a little more careful," Silvan's gentle voice caressed the audience's ears. That lightning attack had been shattered by a sharp "arrow" which had been shot from the east wing. Everyone only noticed afterward that it was not an arrow, but a dart. They had never seen a dart being shot out at such velocity and intensity. The sonic boom created by the dart as it pierced through the air and the clash with the Special Item was so loud that it stunned everyone for a moment.

"Let's fight after we have searched through our own respective sections. We have plenty of time. There is no need to target Peach now." He used the same natural and intimate way of speaking. If Lin Sanjiu had not spoken to him before, she would probably believe that Peach was someone important to him.

The people from the west wing seemed shaken up by that attack. They did not take any action even after Peach ran back to the east wing. Everything seemed to return to the situation 30 minutes before. Lin Sanjiu and the siblings continued searching through the bookshelves with their guard up.

Unlike previously, they would pull out books with titles that seemed powerful and put them in a pile on the ground, just as a backup.

"Hey, do you think the other teams have also discovered that these books are Special Items?" Rena asked softly as she pointed at the books on the bookshelves. Reno shook his head and was just about to speak when Lin Sanjiu, who was not far from them, replied, "At the moment, I think only our team and probably the people from the north wing know about this... But, this isn't something we can hide. Eventually, they will all find out."

"I am just curious. Why don't the people from the library wings on the same side fight with each other? Are the east-west and north-south wings connected in some way? Could that be the reason why they're trying to attack each other?" Lin Sanjiu mumbled quietly as she analyzed the situation.

"This is very plausible." When the siblings thought about this, they heard Siri's monotonous, emotionless voice through the speaker. Her voice resonated through Kisaragi library:

"Progress report: as of now, one book has been found."

Chapter 256: The Information Lin Sanjiu Uncovered

"That's impossible!" Reno almost couldn't control his volume, being the first to react to that information. "There are at least 800,000 books in each wing! Are you saying that they have finished searching through all those books so quickly?!"

"Who, where and which book..." Rena also became anxious. "Why didn't she announce that information?"

"Could this be pure luck?" Lin Sanjiu thought doubtfully.

The rules of Kisaragi Library's book-searching event were very clear. It wasn't the sort of mystery where they had to understand the underlying logic to get the right answers. It was as direct as can be. The participants just had to look for the books. There wasn't any sort of wordplay or trickery.

Under this condition, even Nüwa would have to slowly search through the books manually. A person had to be a wizard if he could just point out the locations of the book with his mind.

"Are there really abilities that work like magic?" Lin Sanjiu sighed softly. She scanned through multiple books in front of her with her higher consciousness. The titles flashed past her eyes quickly. Some of the titles were very close to the target books but when she paused to take a closer look, she would find titles like "The Alluring Consort Escapes With a Baby" and other titles that were just slightly different. It was disappointing.

"I've heard of that before, in Twelve Worlds Centrum. However, that's like witchcraft and nobody knows if it is true," the teenage boy, who appeared more worried than before, answered Lin Sanjiu as he understood where she was coming from. "If there is someone with that ability, that person would be able to find the next book very quickly."

However, what happened next proved that the incident had nothing to do with witchcraft. For the next 28 hours, Siri did not make any further announcements that another book had been found.

Perhaps, everyone had been affected by the announcement that a book had been found, so no one from any of the four wings made any sound. There wasn't any other sort of disturbance. It was as if all the other teams, like Lin Sanjiu and the siblings, were fully engrossed in finding the target books.

After searching futilely for a long time, someone finally took action.

They suddenly heard a hoarse but penetrating voice. The person had a grating voice, like the sound of sandpaper scraping on a surface. The siblings who had been sleeping with their heads together woke up abruptly, startled by the voice. While they still looked a little drowsy, they could hear the person speaking with the ear-abusing, bad-sounding voice, "Hey... You fella from the east wing, what did you ask Siri? Why was there an announcement that someone had found a book after you guys went to ask her a question? I don't mean to insinuate anything, I just want to know your question."

Nobody knew what was wrong with the person's voice. It sounded like sandpaper and the sound of nails scratching a blackboard. The person's voice was so creepy that it could give people goosebumps.

When Silvan finally spoke, the siblings had a sort of "our-ears-are-saved" feeling.

However, what he said was a little hard to understand:

"I can tell you what we asked her. There is no need for us to hide anything," Silvan said with a breezy voice, as if he was unaware of the hidden intentions of the speaker from the west wing, "Peach, why don't you tell that man what you asked Siri?"

The woman spoke immediately, "I asked Siri, 'Do you know where the five books are?' Then, Siri replied that she didn't know."

All the people who were listening intently to her were a little flabbergasted by what she said.

"She took the effort to run downstairs but she asked Siri such a stupid question? If Siri knew where the books were, would she need so many people to look for the books?"

Almost as if he could read everyone's mind, Silvan suddenly raised his voice and said, "If you don't believe me, please feel free to approach Siri and ask her to tell you the question we posed. That would prove that we are not the ones who found that book."

The library fell silent once more after his words. The west wing had already picked on the east wing a couple of times. Obviously, they would not go downstairs right now and reveal themselves to their opponents. The south wing and the North wing were also guarding against each other. They were all afraid that they would be taken advantage of if they went downstairs to question Siri.

The only exception was the team in the central hall.

"We will go and verify." A nice-sounding, crystal clear voice rang out from the bookshelves below as everyone's attention turned to the central hall.

After being attacked by the people from the north wing, Lin Sanjiu's team did not face any further hostility from the other teams. When they fought with the north wing, they had only taken two lives from the members. That could not be compared with the animosity between the north and south wing. In conclusion, they were definitely the most suitable team to approach Siri.

"But, I hope our dear friends from the west wing and south wing wouldn't try any sneak attacks this time."

As the cold, clear voice traveled from the bookshelves, a skinless person stepped out. After 28 hours, Lin Sanjiu's muscles, fat, and

blood vessels had all fully developed. She was only missing her skin and thus looked even scarier. The contrast between her voice and her appearance created a slight commotion, but very quickly the library became quiet once again.

Lin Sanjiu's every step gave everyone the impression that she was walking normally, but she was the only one who was clearly aware of the very, very narrow gap between her sole and the ground. If she relaxed, she would immediately float up in midair. She had carefully chosen a book for defense and had converted it into a card. She held the card tightly in her hand and solidified her higher consciousness to an unprecedented extent. She braced herself for any unexpected, sneak attacks as she headed toward Siri.

Thankfully, everyone seemed eager to know the outcome she would get. Nobody tried to attack Lin Sanjiu even when she was near Siri's work desk.

"600 meters , " Lin Sanjiu thought to herself silently when she stopped.

Siri looked the same. When Siri saw Lin Sanjiu approaching, the librarian looked up with her gold-rimmed spectacles.

The library was very quiet. Lin Sanjiu could almost feel the needle-like gaze behind her back. Lin Sanjiu suppressed her unease and asked softly, "Did the east wing team ask you that question? Are they telling the truth? Please answer me with the speaker."

As Lin Sanjiu's request didn't affect the rules, Siri followed her instructions. She shot a glance at Lin Sanjiu before speaking into a microphone, "Yes, the east wing team asked me if I knew where the books were."

Her words sounded clearly and loudly, reaching every corner of the library.

"How did you answer them?" Lin Sanjiu tried to speak as quietly

as possible so as to ensure that Siri was the only one who could hear her, "Please use the speaker to answer me."

"I replied, 'I don't know'." Everyone heard Siri's voice loud and clear. It stirred up another round of whispering. No one expected that the east wing team would ask such a useless question.

The sudden commotion was interrupted by the voice of the woman from the south wing, "Miss, could you help me ask Siri a question?"

"Could you help me ask if the east wing team only asked that single question?"

"Here it comes!" Lin Sanjiu pursed her lips.

If people were just whispering previously, this woman's request had stirred up a large commotion.

The quiet discussions from the teams from the four wings filled the library, but Lin Sanjiu did not walk back to the bookshelves. Instead, she looked around. The teams from all four wings were still shocked by the woman's question. Meanwhile, they did not notice Lin Sanjiu's unusual behavior and couldn't care less about attacking her. However, Lin Sanjiu knew that she only had a few precious seconds.

Grabbing this opportunity, Lin Sanjiu asked a question so quickly that it was almost impossible for anyone to catch what she said. However, Siri wasn't just an ordinary person. She fully understood Lin Sanjiu question and answered Lin Sanjiu.

When Lin Sanjiu heard the answer from Siri, she controlled the intense emotions she felt. She turned and rushed back to the bookshelves as fast as she could. Lin Sanjiu, who had almost completed the full construction of her body, moved so quickly that she was just a blurred image and the only thing acting against her was just air resistance.

"Boom!" She had just taken a few steps when the spot she was

standing in previously was blasted to bits by some unknown force.

When Lin Sanjiu finally reached the bookshelves, she let out a sigh of relief. When the siblings saw her, they quickly asked, "How was it? Are you alright?"

"As expected." Lin Sanjiu was so worked up that she didn't even bother asking who attacked her, "Silvan found that book!"

Chapter 257: Silvan's Discovery

"What? How do you know?" The siblings were shocked and couldn't help asking Lin Sanjiu the same question at the same time, almost inaudibly.

Lin Sanjiu steadied herself but she couldn't help peering out from the gaps between the bookshelves. White smoke rose from the previous attack and slowly spread out in front of Siri's work desk. Lin Sanjiu could see the shallow dent on the ground through the white smoke. Her gaze swept past the dent, landing on the multimedia section. She eyed the same spot for a few full seconds.

"Because... It was too illogical for them to risk coming to the central hall just to ask that useless question. I couldn't help myself, so I tested my conjecture," she replied softly.

Lin Sanjiu already had an idea in the beginning. The first two questions she asked were what the people from the north, west and south wings wanted. From Siri's answer, there was no problem with those questions. Speaking softly and getting Siri to reply with the microphone was also part of her plan. She wanted to create a sort of false association for the teams from the four wings: "The skinless human doesn't have a microphone, so we can't hear her. But we can hear Siri because Siri has a microphone, so we can hear Siri's answer."

Once people had a false association, it would become a cognitive blind spot. They wouldn't even consider the fact that posthumans could actually speak very loudly if they wanted to. Lin Sanjiu had learned this tactic from Hannie.

Truth be told, it was useful to exploit humans' natural cognitive biases.

When the woman from the south wing requested for Lin Sanjiu

to ask Siri if the people from the east wing only posed one question, the situation changed.

After the woman from the south wing finished her sentence, Lin Sanjiu looked at Siri. This time, however, she did not parrot the question as per the audience expectations. Instead, she asked very softly and very quickly, "You can hear me right? Please do not use the microphone to answer. Please only provide your next answer to me."

Lin Sanjiu's non-existent heart thumped loudly. Siri stared at her expressionlessly and pushed away the microphone. Lin Sanjiu felt her heart settling back in its place.

"No," Siri spoke very quietly as if she understood Lin Sanjiu's intentions, "The east wing team did not only ask one question. They asked me another question."

Lin Sanjiu was so tense that her fingers starting feeling numb. It had only been two to three seconds since the woman from the south wing had asked her question. From an outsider's perspective, it looked as though Lin Sanjiu had just finished asking her question. That meant that Lin Sanjiu had the time to "cover up" her actions. A person can easily twist their question to receive a predetermined answer. "The team from the south wing only wanted me to ask that one question, right? Please use the microphone to answer me."

"That's right. That's the only question," Siri answered with a voice that sounded almost pre-programmed. Her voice rang out clearly from the speakers and caused a round of commotion. Admittedly, Lin Sanjiu managed her timing very well so everyone believed that the answer was directed to the question posed by the woman from the south wing.

"Now, without using the microphone, please tell me the answer to the second question they posed." Lin Sanjiu had never spoken so fast in her life. She was so nervous that it felt like her blood vessels

were on fire. This was the main aim of her actions!

"I told them, 'The book, The Blooming Dawn, can be found in C section Bookshelf 76, 4th shelf, 7th book'."

When Lin Sanjiu had just heard Siri's answers, she immediately realized that she been standing in the same spot for too long. Before she could say another word to Siri, she turned and rushed toward the bookshelves. She had just taken her second step when some unknown person from one of the teams had destroyed the spot she was at.

After they heard Lin Sanjiu's account, the siblings were a little stunned. However, they still couldn't figure out how she came to the conclusion that Silvan had found a book.

"You have the beginning and the end of the story, you just miss the clue in the middle. Come on, it's not that hard," Lin Sanjiu didn't spell things out for the siblings, she just gave them a vague hint. As the kids were still young, she felt that it was a crime to just spoon-feed them without giving them the opportunity to think.

Rena held the spine of a book unconsciously. She repeated softly, "The Blooming Dawn... The Blooming Dawn... It isn't one of the target books. Ah! Oh! Ah! I know!"

She suddenly cried out and her face turned red with excitement. At the same time, Reno quickly jumped up and pulled his sister, "No, let me explain!"

The siblings had figured out the intricacies within the answers at the same time.

"We were searching in the wrong place!" Reno muttered, his eyes fleeting across the rows of bookshelves and he fixed his gaze at the Multimedia section. "Siri doesn't know where the target books are but she knows the location of every book on these bookshelves. That's to say..."

"The target books are simply not on the bookshelves!" Rena could hold herself back and blurted out her conclusion.

Her brother could only swallow back his words, feeling a little disgruntled.

"That's right," Lin Sanjiu smiled. Even though her smile was a little scary, the kids seemed very encouraged by her reaction. "Silvan definitely came to the same conclusion. He must have found a target book in one of the non-book section in the east wing... But, we just don't know which book it is."

"That's not it... Did you guys notice which direction the thing which attacked me came from?" she asked coolly.

"No... That thing did not travel in a straight trajectory. Instead, something like an explosion target suddenly appeared..." Reno said as he recalled what had happened, "It is impossible to know who attacked you."

"I am about 80% confident that the person who tried to attack me was Silvan," Lin Sanjiu said mildly. "When I was in front of Siri, I spent about three seconds longer than average to ask that additional question. Considering his ability to think, he must have noticed that something was amiss. He wanted to scare me away—but he was a step too late."

The two kids looked at each other and couldn't help feeling a little tongue-tied.

"Not only is he handsome, but he is a little difficult to deal with..." Reno said with almost a sigh.

"Let's ignore him. Anyway, he missed! There is no time to lose. Let's start searching in the non-books section," Rena gestured happily. "Isn't the multimedia section the best place to start!"

She was right. There were many non-books sections in the central hall: the entrance, Siri's work desk, the multimedia section, and the reading area with tables and chairs. The

multimedia section was the closest to the bookshelves. They could reach that area after walking past bookshelf 100. However, the multimedia section was directly under the second floor of the west wing.

Chapter 258: The Last Ten Seconds

All sorts of books, new and old, thick and thin, were swept off the heavy bookshelf which was made of quality hardwood. They fell from the shelf one after the other, making a pitter-patter sound like rain. The evil perpetrator of this action acted swiftly and before long the bookshelf was half empty.

"Look at this, will this book work?"

The young teenage girl held an old book between her white fingers. She called out to her brother and Lin Sanjiu, who were not far from her, "It's called 'The hidden truth'. There is the word hidden. Maybe, we could use this."

Lin Sanjiu and the siblings decided to search through the sea of books in front of them to find for a way to enter the multimedia section right under the noses of the west wing team. As each of these books was a Special Item, they were sure that they could find a book whose effects would allow them to enter the multimedia section undetected. The biggest problem was that they could not open the books to check their content.

Once a book was opened, the content of what they read would immediately be activated as the book's effect. The effect could only be activated once and the book would become just a normal book which couldn't be used again. In other words, they could only judge the usability of a book's content by its title or the occasional summary on the back of the book.

Lin Sanjiu looked up and frowned immediately.

"Pick up the books on the floor!" Even though she spoke quietly, her words were firm, "If the bookshelves are empty, what would block us from their line of sight?"

This was the first time Lin Sanjiu had lectured her, but Rena panicked inexplicably. "Oh," she replied before bending down and

collecting the books hurriedly. After she placed some of the books back, she suddenly felt somewhat indignant. She wanted to throw a tantrum but she just couldn't. In the end, she placed all the books back on the bookshelves obediently. Then, she sashayed over to the end of bookshelf 100 and placed the book on the book pile there. There was a large pile of books on the floor. They had all been carefully selected based on their potential effects.

As there were many pages in a book, there was no guarantee that the page they read would hold the effects they needed. With that in mind, they had decided to place all the useful books to one side on the outset. A few hours had passed since Lin Sanjiu approached Siri. Through the windows, the color of the sky hinted that dawn was arriving.

Observing the situation from yesterday morning, the lights in Kisaragi Library would be switched off at 5 am. At that time, the library would become dark—though not as dark as during the night—but it would give Lin Sanjiu and the siblings a good opportunity to act.

"Ready?" Lin Sanjiu was crouching. She led the way, as the two kids followed behind her. They looked a little pale as they nodded their heads. This was already the third day since they entered the library. This also meant that the actual number of lives Rena had was only 1.

At the moment, they had no idea what would happen if Rena received a lethal attack. They did not know if her "life" would be deducted from the actual 1, or the 4 that was on her back. Neither did they have an opportunity to ask Siri this question. Consequently, it was inevitable that the siblings were feeling very nervous.

"Just follow behind me later. If anyone attacks, I will take on the blows. Don't let yourself be separated from the group." Lin Sanjiu advised, "My body is a hundred times more resilient than your bodies, so my number won't drop."

Hearing this, Rena let out a sigh, sounding a little relieved. Reno looked at the wall clock in the central hall and pulled out a small backup torch. Lin Sanjiu reached for one of the books and opened it from the middle.

"...Thus, before we could get a more accurate information about the situation, we could only wait helplessly and anxiously. Jumon, our tribe chief noticed our predicament and took the initiative to lend us his car..."

The effect of the book was "A way out of a predicament". Even though it was very useful, it wasn't suitable for their current situation, so they had wasted the book. Lin Sanjiu sighed and quickly took another book.

"...based on the logical considerations behind this behavior, this is something very meaningful. Was there any other way to change this situation other than improving the natural essence of the matter? Unfortunately..."

"This won't work either."

"...She felt a wet sensation gliding past her thigh. It landed sloppily on the floor, spreading out like a blooming white tulip. Goodbye, my child..."

"No."

".... she didn't want this! This man was more handsome, more influential, and richer. But so what? Did he think he could do whatever he wanted to her? They were just lovers by contract!"

"What bullshit is this!"

As Lin Sanjiu grew increasingly frustrated, Reno suddenly exclaimed softly, "This!" Both Lin Sanjiu and Rena looked over at the same time.

"Luo Bixue knew very well that Li Yulong was a man that was destined to have more than one woman. Besides, she was willing to allow Li Yulong to have more women, to share her burden..."

"This is worse than the previous book!"

"What can this shitty book do?" Rena asked with a frown. Much to their surprise, the book's effect was incredibly useful.

[A Description of Twisted Logic]

If such a plot devoid of normal human logic can be rationalized in a few thousand words, you can twist everything in your reality.

"Quick, let's do it now!" Lin Sanjiu's eyes lit up. She patted Reno's shoulder and he reacted immediately. He grabbed the book and ran out of the book section. Each book can be employed in its unique manner with minute differences between the users as it is entirely based on how a user interprets its effects. After a few seconds, Reno suddenly turned back and gestured for them. Lin Sanjiu and Rena immediately rushed toward him.

The west wing was quiet, though they could occasionally hear some footsteps. Even though west wing team was very close to Lin Sanjiu and the siblings, they did not notice anything unusual downstairs.

"We only have five minutes," Reno blurted rapidly as he crouched hastily beside a desk while he surveyed all possible crevices and hiding spaces. "Right now, our existence had been twisted. If someone were to look for us, they would still see us in the books section... While the item is activated, we can't attack anyone. Let's find the book!"

There were 200 computers in the multimedia section. The possibility of searching through all the desk spaces in five minute was slim. However, none of them had the time to complain now. They grabbed every single second they had and searched the area for anything that looked like a book.

"We still have 3 minutes."

"We still have 2 minutes."

Reno announced each time a minute had passed. They had to

rush back to the bookshelves within 5 minutes, otherwise, they would be spotted by the people from the west wing...

"We still have 10 seconds!" While the teenager shouted anxiously, Lin Sanjiu's fingers trembled when she touched a cool and smooth cover of a book...

She grabbed it and saw its title: A Girl's Sorrow.

Chapter 259: Getting the First Target Book!

Lin Sanjiu could not remember the exact sequence of what happened next.

"We only have 5 seconds left, let's retreat!" Reno yelled. Meanwhile, she grabbed the book and sped toward the books section. At the same time, Siri's monotonous voice announced, "Progress report: two books have been found". Suddenly, there was a shout from the west wing. This was quickly followed by a bright flash behind her...

Everything happened at the same time around her. Lin Sanjiu found herself overloaded by a whirl of information.

Her mind came to a blank. She couldn't even hear the noise around her clearly, as if she was underwater and the sounds were far away. She saw Reno and Rena's back and the tall bookshelves just in front of her.

Suddenly, a loud explosion broke through Lin Sanjiu's zoned-out state, piercing right through to her higher consciousness. This time, the attack was different. It scrapped past her heel and hit the ground. The floor tiles, tables, and chairs were instantly pulverized. Lin Sanjiu clenched her teeth and flew up, finally dashing into the walkway between two bookshelves.

The attacks outside stopped abruptly.

Lin Sanjiu could hear the siblings' labored breaths. Lin Sanjiu looked at them and realized that there was a long gash on Reno's arm. It was so deep that she could see his flesh and half his body was covered with blood. However, the teenager seemed to be ignoring his pain. Even though he had a wincing expression due to his wound, he sounded very excited, "Did you grab it? Which book is it?"

Lin Sanjiu slid to the ground as she leaned against a bookshelf.

She smacked the "A Girl's Sorrow" book on the ground. She couldn't help let out a long sigh of relief in her mind. When the two kids saw the cover of the book, they immediately made many "Oohs and Aahs".

It sure wasn't easy to get their hands on this one book!

However, they still couldn't let their guard down.

After resting for five to six seconds, Lin Sanjiu was the first to leap up.

"That last attack scrapped past my heel..." She looked down at the kids. "The west wing was right behind me. Their attacks can't hit at that angle. Did you see where the attack originated?"

Rena was looking for a few medical books on emergency treatment for her brother. When she heard Lin Sanjiu, she stopped and tried to remember what had happened. She held on to a book and replied a little hesitantly, "At that time, the situation was very tense. It was too chaotic so I didn't notice... But, judging from that angle, it should be from the east wing or the south wing, I guess?"

The east wing and south wing relatively far from the multimedia section. Yet, there was a large book section between the north wing and the multimedia section so they could eliminate the North wing first.

"It came from the south wing," Reno replied, still panting. He took a few books from his sister. They had titles like "First aid for External Wounds", "Recovery and Treatment", etc.

"I got this wound from the people in the south wing. When the team from the west wing discovered us, the one in the south also started attacking us."

Rena's face turned white with anger, "Are they taking advantage of us just because of our position? Everyone just attacked us randomly! We can't take this lying down!"

Lin Sanjiu wasn't worried about that. She contemplated for a moment. Before she could say something, a cold woman's voice suddenly interrupted her:

"You, missus from the central hall, did you guys find a target book just a minute ago?"

The person who spoke was the woman from the south wing. It was actually very difficult for Lin Sanjiu's team to deny this.

From the other teams' perspectives, they had left the books section unexpectedly. Braving significant risks, they hid themselves in the multimedia section using some sort of method. Next, when they ran back to the books section, Siri suddenly made an announcement. Everyone around them wasn't stupid enough to believe them even if they denied that they found that book.

Just when Lin Sanjiu was nervously trying to think of the best way to word her answer, Silvan suddenly spoke with his low, nice-sounding voice. However, his words were not as pleasing.

"I think we can discuss about the two books that were found later. Instead, right now, I hope that you can give us a clue about how we can find the other target books... After all, you wouldn't want to be enemies with all four wings." His spoke with a calm demeanor and it did not sound like a threat at all. Though he sounded very sincere, Lin Sanjiu really wanted to curse him!

With Silvan's words enforcing everyone's impression of them, it seemed as though their team had found two books!

Lin Sanjiu figured that Silvan probably was aware that they had discovered his secret when he saw them running from the multimedia section. In order to hinder and get rid of his competition, the first step he took was to just set them up as a target for everyone else.

"You sure act fast," Lin Sanjiu cursed softly. Despite how disgruntled she felt, she had to admit that she had to applaud

Silvan's quick thinking. She could feel the siblings looking at her; they seemed at a loss as to what to do. Lin Sanjiu weighed their options in her mind quickly and felt that they did not have much choice. She clenched her teeth and spoke out loudly.

"Honestly speaking, we don't mind sharing the clue we have." When she said that, the kids were shocked. "We actually found this book by chance."

She stressed the word "this book", hoping that someone would understand what she meant.

"There are so many bookshelves and over a hundred thousand books. We just had a massive headache after searching for such a long time. Thus, we decided to search around the areas without books first, trying to eliminate those areas before finally searching the bookshelves again. Lo and behold, we actually found a target book." Lin Sanjiu tried to make her words sound as truthful and sincere as possible, "We only know that much."

The people around them might not necessarily believe her words. In any case, admitting that they found a target book in a non-book section was more than sufficient!

When the library erupted into a flurry of murmurs, Rena couldn't help tugging Lin Sanjiu's sleeve, "Why did you admit that we found a book?" the girl was a little anxious, "You even told them so much!"

"We don't have any other choice," Lin Sanjiu sighed softly. "If I don't say that, the other teams would think that we are holding some important clue. By then, with Silvan fanning the flames, we will have to deal with enemies attacking us non-stop. If I give them a clue now, we will have a chance to prepare ourselves while they try to find the other books."

Reno's wound had stopped bleeding after he used the healing effect of a book. When he heard Lin Sanjiu's explanation, he quickly asked, "Prepare ourselves? What are we going to do next?"

Lin Sanjiu did not answer him, she stared at Siri's work desk which was some distance from them.

"I have an idea..."

The light from the rising sun poured through the window clearly illuminating the muscles at the back of Lin Sanjiu's neck. Rena suddenly noticed a honey-colored piece of skin at the back of Lin Sanjiu's ear.

" Huh! " Rena exclaimed in her mind.

She saw Lin Sanjiu suddenly reaching to touch the small patch of skin before laughing softly. "I think we made the right decision to choose the central hall," Lin Sanjiu said.

Chapter 260: The Quiet Central Hall

No one could predict that Kisaragi Library would fall into an unprecedented chaos after 7 hours.

After searching for almost a day, there was no progress report about the third book from Siri. Finally, someone got impatient. The sound of the first explosion which ignited the chaos came from the library's ceiling. This was quickly followed by a successive series of booms and bangs with fire and sparks flying everywhere. Then, the library fell into darkness.

No one saw clearly the direction which the attacks were launched from. All the lights were destroyed in an instant.

"Hey, youngster from the east wing!" Right after the library became dark, the man with the fingernails-on-blackboard voice suddenly rang out. His voice was so loud that the ceiling vibrated noisily as if his voice had been amplified a few hundred times.

"I know that you have at least one target book. You better hand it over now!" The ear-piercing voice almost seemed to have a life of its own, boring right into the listeners' mind, giving the listeners the urge to roll about holding their head.

Perhaps it was the sudden darkness or the unexpected yelling demand, but the library fell into an abrupt silence for two seconds. Shockingly, the next person that spoke wasn't Silvan.

The woman from the south wing spoke with a cold, ruminating voice.

"My blond-haired brother, considering the current circumstances, why don't you just come clean with us?" The woman from the South wing scoffed, "I'm not as intelligent as you. It took me this long to realize something. Both of you have already formed an alliance with that skinless person from the central hall, right? You guys coordinated your words so well, you really fooled

the rest of us. You probably released the information that the target books are in the non-book sections after you guys found a book as a team, right? "

The library went silent for a moment before Silvan replied. He did not raise his voice purposely like the people from the two other wings, yet everyone could still somehow hear his deep, mellow, gentle voice. Everyone could even hear the breath between his words clearly, like a lover whispering in their ears. "Miss South Wing, what do you mean by that?"

His voice was like a feather gliding softly across his listeners' necks. Even the woman from the south wing needed some time to calm herself before she could continue speaking without blushing, "I said that you guys had all this planned out! There is only a small reading area with tables and chairs in each of the four wings, but there is a large reading area connecting two different wings. You put on a joint performance with the people from the central hall. After each getting a book, you guys are waiting for us to fight amongst ourselves!"

Just as she finished her sentence, a person with a "rustling" voice added impatiently, "Youngster, there should be a book in the reading area connecting both our wings, east and west wing. A moment ago, we prepared ourselves well before heading there to search for one of the target books. However, we found nothing. We didn't find a single book and we didn't meet you guys!"

"Oh?" Silvan exclaimed as if considering something. After a while, he suddenly asked, "Our friends from the north wing, aren't you going to say something?"

"This book-searching thing requires too much mental work," the man with a top hat laughed softly and spoke with a cold, stony voice, "We have our own way of leaving this library. You guys can go ahead and fight for the five books."

They actually chose to stay out of the tussle.

Meanwhile, the central hall was silent. There wasn't a single sound coming from them. The skinless person and the pair of teenagers seemed to have suddenly become deaf and dumb. They did not make any responses despite the ongoing conversation.

Silvan suddenly frowned slightly in the dark. The woman named Peach had been observing him silently. When she saw his expression change, she immediately whispered, "What happened? Is something wrong?"

Despite her questions, she did not sound even a little anxious, instead, she sounded like she had the same blind confidence that Silvan had, "What should we do next? Tell me what to do and I'll execute it immediately."

"It's okay. Don't worry," Silvan looked behind and consoled her. When Peach caught his gaze, she couldn't help lowering her head to avert it immediately.

"I just find the people from the central hall strange. As for the other teams, I don't even care about them," Silvan continued.

The current situation was very obvious. The south wing and west wing had silently formed an alliance at some point in time through some unknown means.

"But with the worth wing involved, I don't think the people from the south wing can do much," Silvan said casually. He narrowed his dark green eyes which were like the green cenotes in the forests, "I'm not afraid of those people in the west wing, but the central—"

Before he could finish his sentence, there was an unexpected turn of events.

A whistling sound filled the air and a few black shadows appeared on the banisters on the second floor of the south wing and north wing, at the same time. They were so fast, it was as if they flew there. Almost at the same time, Siri's monotonous voice rang out,

"Progress report: the third book has been found."

Footsteps rang out from the area near the west wing. The noise traveled through the reading area between the east and west wing, heading toward the west wing.

"What's going on?" Peach was really shocked this time around. She held Silvan's sleeve helplessly. "Who found that book? Why are they all attacking us... Huh?"

She suddenly noticed what was wrong but momentarily couldn't make sense of the situation. The black shadows on the second floor of the north wing jumped down. They were targeting the team in the central hall. The two people from the south wing quickly rushed over to the entrance of the east wing—that was the staircase from the east wing leading to the central hall.

The situation should be very dangerous for them, but Peach sensed Silvan letting out a sigh of relief, as if he had gotten a burden off his mind. She did not know why he was relieved but she didn't care to know. With a trembling voice, she asked, "What should we-we do?"

"It's alright," Silvan seemed to pity her uneasiness. He touched her hair and said, "Didn't I tell you what to do? Let's act now."

Peach nodded firmly. She turned and sprinted.

She had just left when a loud boom came from the few bookshelves at the edge of the east wing. The bookshelves at the frontline were damaged. Someone among the people from the west wing, had a terrifying amount of strength. That attack flung a few tall bookshelves into the air, as if it was as simple as flicking a few water droplets. The floor shook and the bookshelves started falling over, one after the other. Once the people from the West wing were convinced that the target books weren't on the bookshelves, they had no qualms destroying all these stupid hindrances.

In stark contrast, the people from the north wing team, who had

entered the central hall, acted very differently.

"Be careful, don't touch the books!" the man in the top hat snarled. "Have you found them?"

He came prepared this time. His members were all holding different books. They were either about spying on one's love rival, seeing through tricks or area surveillance. If Lin Sanjiu and the siblings were still in the central hall, they would definitely find them using the effects from their books...

However, after searching the book section upside down, the man with the top hat was stunned.

"Where are they?!"

Chapter 261: The... Pet in the North Wing?

The whole library shook non-stop amidst the shouts and occasional flashes of light. After some sort of large collision, dust and debris poured down from the crevices of the ceiling directly onto Reno's face. He squeezed his eyes shut and tried his best to suppress his urge to sneeze.

If he were to make any careless sound, the attacks from the south wing and the north wing would instantly obliterate all his lives. This was because Reno was lying directly behind the corpse from the north wing. In other words, he was currently in the middle of the central hall, in a wide-open space, in a vulnerable place that was exposed to everyone. He pressed his back tightly against Siri's work desk. Within the pitch-black library, Siri's face was the only thing that was illuminated by a white light. As she moved, the light on her face from the monitor screen shifted. One could even vaguely see a few lines of words from the reflection on her spectacle lens.

She lowered her eyes and threw a glance at Reno through her spectacles. Then, she stared back at her screen once more without saying a word. As Reno's hiding spot was on the other side of Siri's computer screen, there was a strong contrast between the bright light and his dark hiding spot, as a result, it was the darkest spot in the whole library. Furthermore, he was shielded by the mutilated corpse in front of him. This was also the reason why no one discovered that there was someone hiding right under their noses even after such a long time.

The dead man's feather duster was lying some distance away from him. Reno's eyes teared as he waited for his sneeze to go away. After that, he curled his body slightly and called softly, "Siri!"

The typing sound from Siri's keyboard stopped suddenly. "Yes?" she answered.

Siri did not make any attempts to hide her actions. Reno's heart suddenly tightened. Luckily, everything around him was too chaotic. Her voice was quickly drowned by all sorts of fighting noises around them. Reno steadied himself as Lin Sanjiu's instructions surfaced in his mind.

"Could you answer me more quietly," he whispered, "I... I have many questions for you."

"What are your questions?" As expected, Siri acquiesced to his request and answered quietly. Reno instantly let out a sigh of relief. He went through the questions in his mind once, and picked one of them, "Do you know the location of the target books that are already found?"

Before Siri could reply, Reno quickly pulled the communicator from his ears and placed it near her.

Half an hour before, Lin Sanjiu didn't anticipate that the opportunity to execute their recently created plan would present itself so quickly. The fluorescent lights had been destroyed with a series of explosion. The moment the library suddenly fell into darkness, Lin Sanjiu immediately snapped out of her shock. She repressed her excitement and nudged the siblings without any warning, urging them softly, "Now!"

The siblings panicked a little, "Huh? Now?"

Lin Sanjiu listened carefully to the voice from the west wing, "Hey, youngster from the east wing!" She quickly turned to the kids and whispered urgently, "Yes. Quick, wear your communicators. We will act according to plan!"

Once they carried out their plans, there was no turning back. However, the teenagers' naive courage overcame any doubts they had about the plan. After the siblings wore their communicators excitedly, Rena suddenly realized something.

"You... don't have a communicator. How are you going to communicate with us?" Rena asked, feeling a little at wit's end.

As the siblings usually kept to themselves, they only brought equipment and items sufficient for two people from Red Nautilus. Lin Sanjiu touched her ears subconsciously and comforted them, "Don't worry. This time, we each have our own tasks... It isn't like we won't be seeing each other again. Since we have a meeting spot, let's meet there later."

The siblings nodded and they split up in the dark. While the other teams argued in the darkness, Reno ran toward Siri's work desk in the center of the hall keeping very close to the walls. Meanwhile, Rena turned around and ran toward the entrance to the north wing in the central hall, which was the staircase to the second floor of the north wing.

Due to some strange consideration, it was impossible to enter the first floor of each library wing from the central hall. The four wings of the library were connected to the central hall only by the staircases leading to their second floors.

Rena wasn't sure if the people from the west wing, opposite to them, could see her. In addition, she didn't know where the members of the north wing team were now. Rena hesitated at the bottom of the staircase and decided to observe the situation first.

Rena, who was not even 160 cm, squeezed herself into a corner, almost touching the ground, and hid behind the handrails of the staircase. It was difficult to spot her... but that was only to the naked eyes.

If someone had some sort of surveillance or heat scanning device, they would find her hiding behind the handrails very easily. They would spot her even if she was hiding underground. Unfortunately, one of the person from the north wing who planned to ambush them had such a book.

When the few people leaped down from the second floor with a

"thud" right in front of Rena, she felt as if her heart had almost flown from her chest. She felt her blood freeze and couldn't move.

"Hurry! Don't miss any spot!" As the man with the top hat dished out an order not far from her, the man standing in front of her took a step forward. Then, he actually ran off toward the book section, following another of this teammate who had jumped off from the second floor with him.

Rena stood in a daze at the same spot for quite some time before she reacted.

"It isn't possible that he let me off on purpose," she thought blankly to herself.

Rena finally realized what had happened only after the black figures disappeared behind the bookshelves. She didn't dare to waste another second staying in the same spot. She couldn't care less whether the people from the west wing could see her, so she turned and ran up the stairs as fast as she could.

When a person used a wide-area surveillance device, they would naturally only look at the surroundings around them. However, Rena was in very close proximity to the man just now. If she peeked out from her hiding space, her nose would have touched his trousers. That is to say, she had been standing within the radius he recognized as his "personal" space!

Once they left, the chance of her being spotted would increase exponentially. If someone were to cast a sweeping glance at the staircase, she would have no chance of survival. She finally rushed to the second floor of the north wing. When she saw the tall bookshelves, Rena immediately let out a sigh of relief and rushed over.

All the people from the north wing had left, so the north wing should be safe. From the looks of things, her mission seemed to be the easiest—

Before that thought faded from her mind, Rena suddenly sensed something amiss. She looked up and saw a palm-sized face which looked as if it belonged to a human and also a snake. That thing had its eyes fixated on her.

Chapter 262: Why Wouldn't You Let me Wear My Shoes?

Siri's voice came fuzzily through the communicator but, right now, Rena did not have the focus to listen to what she had to say. If you find yourself staring back at a long, wet, sticky tongue flickering at you, trying to pick up your scent, you probably wouldn't have the mood to listen to a person speaking beside you.

Rena felt a natural aversion and fear of the creature in front of her, but she suppressed the emotions that made her legs tremble. She tried her best to speak coolly, "Duoluo zhong?"

She was unaware that she had unconsciously imitated Lin Sanjiu's cool-headed way of speaking. Siri's voice continued fuzzily over the communicator. Evidently, Reno did not catch what his sister said. Even though Siri did not mention anything about duoluo zhongs, Kisaragi Library was still a part of an apocalyptic world. It wasn't totally unimaginable that a duoluo zhong would appear there.

Rena stared blankly as the densely-packed pores on both sides of the tongue suddenly contracted. Without warning, saliva dripped from the tongue and fell to the ground with a loud pitter-patter. A drop landed on Rena's shoe. Perhaps the word 'tongue' wasn't the best term to describe this thing, it was more like the strange creature's combination of a weapon and a breathing apparatus. With the creature's weapon pointing directly at her, Rena's mind spun wildly as she decided on what she would do next.

She only had a 3 on her back now. Even though Reno begged her to attack him so that he could transfer a few lives over to her, due to the fact a person would lose their ability to fight for some time after receiving a lethal blow, they shelved the idea.

"Then, how should I fight?"

The flat, long face slowly lifted its head from the top of the bookshelf before it slid down from the top of the bookshelf, giving its observer's a head-numbing sensation. As it moved, it gradually revealed its body to Rena.

Its cylindrical body was like that of an earthworm, and even its color was the same as an earthworm. It was so large that Rena would not be able to hold the girth of its body even if she used both her arms. When it finally slid down from the bookshelf and raised its body, Rena finally saw its full size. Its upper body was already two meters tall, casting a long black shadow.

Rena shot a glance at the other half of the creature's body which was still in the dark. She gulped.

"Do the people from the north wing know of its existence? It's huge. How can they not know? What is this anyway? But, if it is related to the north wing team, why didn't they bring it along..."

While Rena's mind was occupied with numerous thoughts, she felt a sudden quick gust. Rena was shocked when she found out that the tongue had disappeared. As there was really very little light around, the "earthworm" took advantage of the low visibility and hid its face in the shadows after it towered over Rena. Subsequently, its tongue, which was almost as thick as a human torso, came out of nowhere and attacked Rena.

The teenage girl rolled away in an unglamorous manner before she hid quickly behind a bookshelf. She felt a sudden burning pain on her back and her arm. Rena instinctively touched both spots with her bare hands. She instantly found that her hand was covered in sticky goo. She didn't know if it was blood or saliva on the ground.

Her skin felt as though it was going to split open. Enduring the pain, she hissed as she looked down at her shoe. The saliva which had touched her show had already burned a hole through its surface. There was a small black hole in her shoe and there was

even smoke sprouting from it.

"Bastard," Rena cursed as she steadied her racing heart. She stretched out her arm and raked a couple of books into her arms. "Why won't the duoluo zhongs here just let me wear my shoes properly?"

After she said that, she heard a rustling sound. Rena turned behind and found a long tongue blocking the path behind her. The pores on the sides of the tongue contracted and more saliva dripped down from it. Oddly, the floor tile did not corrode from the saliva. There were only many 'corrosive puddles' on the floor—

Rena felt another gust of wind. This time around, it was clear that the black shadow that came from her side was trying to force her into one of the 'corrosive puddles'. As the creature could only discharge the saliva from the sides of its tongue, it probably couldn't control the direction of this discharge. Consequently, the "earthworm" chose such a method to fight. Rena didn't dare to take on a direct attack from that saliva-covered tongue. She fell to the ground and rolled away. However, before she could steady herself, the tongue swerved in a different direction and came for her again. As it moved its tongue, it flung saliva through the air, which fell to the ground successively.

Rena had already reached the banisters on the second floor. If she took another step back, she would fall from the second floor. She gritted her teeth and used her body to shield the books. As the drops of saliva splashed on her body, burning through her clothes and scalding her skin, Rena opened two books simultaneously as her eyes glided across the book pages.

However, when Rena tried to read the words, her heart froze instantly.

It was too dark so she almost couldn't see a single word. However, she wasn't willing to throw down the books and just run away. Trying her luck, she planted her face right up to the page.

However, she could only make out a few blurry words from using the dim intermittent lights from the explosions from another wing of the library. However, the few words she could read could not even form a proper sentence. Naturally, she couldn't activate any sort of good effect from the books.

She didn't know when the attack behind her suddenly stopped.

She only spent three to four seconds reading the book, but it was too long. Rena felt the floor vibrating slightly. The page she was looking at suddenly turned black. The few words she could read previously were suddenly blocked by a huge shadow. She shut the book and turned around.

She didn't know when that flat, noseless face had already edged close to her shoulder. Its chin hung over her left shoulder. It opened its huge mouth, which stretched open like a zipper from one side of its face to another.

"What are you looking at, little girl?"

Rena froze.

The "earthworm" squeezed out a voice, which did not match its appearance at all. With an ostentatious tone, it drew its long body closer and blocked Rena's path, trapping Rena in front of the banisters.

"Why are you reading in the dark? What's in the book?" Excitement poured from its greasy voice, as it switched its pitch suddenly, "Tell me now!"

When it spoke, Rena could still see the outline of its tongue rolling in its mouth. She felt cold sweat all over her body, and her palm was so wet that she couldn't hold on to the books in her hands properly.

Suddenly, she had an idea.

"Don't... don't hurt me," she controlled her breath and purposely trembling voice, "I will tell you. Just wait. Let me find some

light..."

Chapter 263: The Mary Sue Chapter

Lin Sanjiu had never seen a team of posthumans whose appearance were so uniformly the same. She stretched her body into a thin long cord, trying to have a better look at them. She crept up the bookshelf like a crawling vine and slowly got closer to the west wing team that Silvan was confronting.

Even though Lin Sanjiu had almost regained her full human appearance, she still retained the special characteristics of her higher consciousness form. With a single thought, she could still float, fly and change her shape. In fact, this was how she boldly climbed up to the east wing. Many people had spotted her while she was heading upstairs, yet no one would even expect that the thing which resembled an electrical cord would actually be a person.

Not long after the "electrical cord" stealthily slithered up to the second floor of the east wing, the attacks from the west wing team stopped. The person who stopped the attacks was their leader, who had that terrible, grating voice. The leader, also the speaker, was a very short man with a very large head. No matter what angle Lin Sanjiu took, that man looked like a mushroom to her. This was even more comical because the four men, also wearing cloaks, looked almost the same as him. At first glance, they looked like a few large mushrooms which were about the same height.

However, despite how comical they looked, the viciousness from the leader's voice wasn't even a tad bit funny. He glared at the man who was sitting on top of a bookshelf and laughed quietly. Lin Sanjiu felt as if her ears hurt like she had been badly scraped by a piece of sandpaper when she heard his voice at such a close range.

"Youngster, are you planning to surrender?"

Silvan was still wearing his blue Munitions Factory uniform. He sat leisurely on top of a bookshelf with his long legs dangling.

When he heard what the man said, he swayed his legs a little childishly. He flashed a grin at the people from the west wing, and his set of straight white teeth seemed to beam even in the dark. "So, it's you guys! They were right, you guys are very recognizable."

"Are they acquaintances?" Lin Sanjiu wondered.

However, she heard Silvan continuing idly, "I heard that you farmers from 'Heaven Underworld' had your territories occupied by other people, so why do you still have the mood to visit other worlds? Oh, is it to train new members? Or to collect stuff?"

Even though Silvan used a very amiable and friendly tone, he apparently managed to prod that leader's sore spot.

The leader's entire demeanor changed, with his fury spewing. After a few seconds, he suddenly let out a malicious laugh, "You must have quite a bit of experience if you know who we are. As expected of a member of the Munitions Factory. Sadly, I don't think you can go back to Munitions Factory."

Lin Sanjiu tried her best to pretend that she was an electric cord. While she listened to their conversation, she was also searching and scanning for any traces or hints of that woman, Peach, through her higher consciousness. Her goal was indeed to get the first target book. Under normal circumstances, the book should be with Silvan at all times. However, considering that he was fighting the team from the west wing alone, he might have given the book to Peach, who would then hide.

However, Lin Sanjiu could not find any trace of that woman even after scanning the entire second floor. She considered her options and decided to take a wait-and-see approach. She wanted to see if she could perhaps find an upper hand while the two sides fought. Lin Sanjiu knew very well that Silvan would be a very troublesome opponent, so observing his battle with the west wing team would be a good opportunity to gather more information about him.

After she made her decision, she took a glance at the spot where they were fighting. Suddenly, she was stunned.

"Why did they stop fighting?"

They weren't fighting. They weren't even talking to each other. It was as if someone had pressed a "freeze frame" button. Both Silvan and the team leader were not moving. There was absolute silence. The leader's mouth was even half-opened, as if he froze just as he was about to speak.

Lin Sanjiu looked at the outside world through her eyes, feeling confused, and back at the scanned image in her mind. When she looked at the two people once again, they had disappeared. Everything around her started spinning, like milk stirred into coffee. Lin Sanjiu felt dizzy. Suddenly, her vision was filled with bright, psychedelic colors. Where did that light come from anyway? The bookshelves became very looooooong. The ceiling became a piece of cloth and suddenly spiky things poked out from the people standing in it.

After staring at it for a few seconds, she fainted. She knew that something had gone wrong but she couldn't think no matter how hard she tried. It was as if her brain had been placed in a freezer and just wouldn't work.

"What's wrong? Why did you revert back to your original form?"

Lin Sanjiu could hear Mrs. Mana's voice, but she sounded very far away. Lin Sanjiu heard her, but she couldn't make sense of what she was saying. She just started giggling without any rhyme or reason.

Lin Sanjiu had unconsciously reverted to "human form". She slid down a bookshelf and floated slightly above the ground, feeling weak and powerless. Just then, Silvan's mellow voice drifted into her ears.

"Your 'magic mushrooms' only work only on people the first

time, right? That explains..."

"That explains what?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't hear him anymore. It was as if someone had covered her ears with a thick wet cloth. She clenched her teeth, gathered a bit of strength and tried her best to hide behind a bookshelf. She drew out a book without thinking and held it in her hands as a preventive measure. She wanted to activate her [Defence Forcefield] but that thought came and went. After trying about two to three times, her body finally glowed slightly.

After a few successive waves of hallucination, she felt as if many years had passed, or was it only a split second? When Lin Sanjiu suddenly snapped out and became sober again, she realized that she was lying on top of a bookshelf. The fight between Silvan and the west wing team had already ended at some point in time.

The faint light from the windows downstairs had been almost fully blocked by a crouching figure, casting a long shadow. In the dim light, the man's dark golden hair almost melted into the darkness behind him

Lin Sanjiu was so startled that she immediately leaped up. While she opened the book in her hands, she had also mentally prepared herself for a tough battle. Surprisingly, Silvan remained in his crouching position and only looked up at her when she stood up.

"You? Who are you?" This was the first time there was actually an uncertainty in his mellow voice. He sounded like he was murmuring as his voice wavered. He stared at Lin Sanjiu's face with his dark green eyes, which were like the lakes in a forest.

"I've never seen you before? What's your name?" he asked.

Lin Sanjiu stared at him blankly for a short moment before she immediately reacted by touching her face. Only then did she realize that her skin and hair on her upper body had all developed. Even though her leg was still reddish and skinless, they were hidden in the dark, but Silvan did not notice them at all.

"Look..." Mrs. Manas spoke to her softly. Lin Sanjiu looked up and noticed a stiff corner of a book sticking out from the back pocket of Silvan's uniform trousers. It looked as if the book had been rolled up and stuffed there...

"I'll tell you," Lin Sanjiu said with her cool, crystal voice before even thinking, "if you come closer."

After that, she bent down slightly. Her hair flowed down her shoulders like water.

Silvan's eyes did not leave her face even for one second. When he heard what she said, he shifted closer to her without even hesitating. Lin Sanjiu smiled faintly and exhaled, as if preparing to say something...

The next second, she attacked the back of Silvan's waist with a violent punch. She actually managed to strike her target.

As it was a sneak attack, Silvan only managed to divert a part of the impact as he dodged slightly but he received most of the impact from that punch. Lin Sanjiu didn't think too much, she reached for his back pocket and quickly pulled the book out. Then, she immediately flipped over to the bookshelf beside them. She was eager to look at the cover of the book.

Chapter 264: The Pitch-Black South Wing Behind Her

If someone told Lin Sanjiu that she had "feminine charms" half an hour before, she might laugh coldly to express her disbelief. However, considering the current situation...

Lin Sanjiu exhaled. She glanced at the book cover once more reluctant to accept the facts before she casually tossed the book back to Silvan.

Just moments before, when Lin Sanjiu held the rolled-up book in her slender hands, her heart nearly missed a beat when she caught a glimpse of the title on the book: "A World History of Asian Art".

"Well, as expected, it isn't the right book." Lin Sanjiu felt a little disappointed. At the same time, she fixed her gaze on the enigmatic man in front of her, "But, it would be rather careless of him if he'd just keep a target book in his back pocket."

Right now, Lin Sanjiu was standing on top of a bookshelf, and the dim sunlight from the window shone on the exposed muscles and blood vessels which belong to her pair of skinless legs. Connecting this to her unique, refreshing voice, Silvan finally realized who the woman in front of him was. He held the side of his waist which bore the brunt of Lin Sanjiu's powerful attack and lowered his head. He took a breath, almost as if laughing or sighing, before he spoke slowly, "So, you are that person from the central hall."

Even though the woman, in front of him, had already showed her open hostility toward him with her surprise attack and stole his item, that did not seem to bother Silvan. His expression mellowed quite a bit but he continued looking at Lin Sanjiu with a glimmer in his eyes.

"This might sound a little offensive," he was almost murmuring his words, "but, would you be willing to join my team?"

"Of course not!" Lin Sanjiu never felt that she had any sort of feminine charm, much less captivate such an attractive-looking man like Silvan. She firmly believed that the man had something up his sleeves so she let out a dry laugh, "Why can't you join my team instead? The first target book must be with that woman called Peach. If you hand her over to me, there is room for negotiation."

"Regarding that matter," Silvan shook his head, seeming to show his disappointment, "I can't do that even if it is a request from you."

The bizarre expression and reaction he had when he first saw Lin Sanjiu had faded fully from his face. Silvan put both his hands in his back pockets and leaned against the bookshelf behind him. He regained his usual laid-back, lazy demeanor. Lin Sanjiu only felt a sense of "normality" when he reverted back to his usual attitude. She scanned her surroundings quickly.

That group of mushroom-like people from the West Wing team had disappeared. There was a black figure on the ground, and that person was clearly not breathing. From the looks of things, the remaining members from that team must have retreated back to the west wing. She had scanned the second floor of the east wing multiple times but she still couldn't find any sign of Peach. She figured that the woman was probably hiding on the first floor.

If she wanted to go to the first floor, she had to bypass Sivan, who was right in front of her. However, she knew that it wasn't going to be easy. The man had just fought off five people from the West wing single handedly, but appeared unharmed. He even killed the person lying on the ground. Not only was he going to be difficult to deal with, Silvan's current number of lives would certainly be dauntingly high. Once the disparity in the number of lives between two parties reach a certain threshold, it would be almost impossible for the person with the lower number to defeat his/her opponent.

Just when Lin Sanjiu was feeling slightly antsy, Silvan suddenly looked up, almost as if he wanted to say something.

Without warning, a "boom" suddenly came from the other end of the library. It wasn't loud, but the light from the red fiery flames which suddenly appeared quickly drove away the darkness from half the library.

As the blaze raged, a sharp screech pierced the air. A black figure of a humongous creature was thrashing around violently in the fire. However, no matter how hard it struggled, it could not escape the fire. The creature shrieked and tossed its body, flinging countless flickering embers in the air. Soon, the fire spread to the handrails of the stairs and then to the bookshelves in the central hall.

The flames that suddenly erupted from the second floor of the north wing had also lit up a small figure hiding near the banisters on the second floor. Lin Sanjiu was startled because she noticed that the small figure hugging a book was Rena.

Almost simultaneously, the members from the North Wing team, who were in the central hall, howled when they realized that their wing was on fire. A few black shadows immediately rushed up the stairs to the second floor of the north wing. Rena was aware that she was in a very bad situation. She immediately stood up and wanted to escape, but the fire around her was too big. She tried a few times to get away but the burning black shadow blocked her and trapped her back into a corner.

When Lin Sanjiu saw that the north wing members had already rushed over to Rena, she couldn't care less about the book that Silvan found. Lin Sanjiu leaped up and immediately lunged herself toward where Rena was. Silvan reacted and chased after her but he wasn't fast enough because seeing Lin Sanjiu fly off the second floor was beyond anything he could expect. He held the banisters tightly and stared motionless in the direction of the north wing. The flickering light from the flames shone on his face, revealing

his stunned expression.

Lin Sanjiu didn't have time to consider what was happening behind her. When she reached the banisters at the north wing, all the flames suddenly extinguished. The library was once again plunged into darkness. As the flames were the special effect from a book, there was a time limit. Once the time was up, the effect naturally disappeared. However, those short 30 seconds were enough to save Rena's life. A few seconds after the fire disappeared, the large earthworm-like creature fell to the ground with a loud bang. It crumbled into large segmented columns of soot.

Even though the creature had been burnt beyond recognition, the people who had rushed up to the north wing to surround Rena were shocked by the sight.

"What's that?" the man in the top hat asked in a mumble as he threw a glance at Rena, who was covered in wounds. "How did you and that thing reach this place?"

After getting rid of one enemy, Rena found herself facing another group of enemies. Using her knees, she supported herself up. She glared at the faces of all the people surrounding her and panted as she replied, "Isn't that thing something you guys left there?"

The man in the top hat examined the column of ashes on the ground curiously before he smiled darkly.

"Little girl, this thing has nothing to do with us. I hope you have enough lives..."

The location Lin Sanjiu landed wasn't that good. She found herself some distance behind the group of people from the north wing. When the man in the top hat said that, Lin Sanjiu had just climbed over the banisters. Unfortunately, a member from the team spotted her.

However, she did not anticipate the following words said to her.

"Ah, seeing that we caught someone, you guys are finally willing to help?" the person scowled, "We already made an agreement yet they only sent you?"

Lin Sanjiu froze. The other party had probably mistaken her for someone else.

"Who? It must be someone they haven't seen before..." As she considered the situation, she answered the person vaguely. She walked over to the person and suddenly realized something. From where the person was facing, Lin Sanjiu realized that the pitch-black south wing was behind her.

Chapter 265: Don't Offend Someone You Can't Afford to Offend

"It is too... too dark.."

When Rena sensed that she had shaken off the group of people chasing her, she couldn't help stopping and hiding behind one of the bookshelves nearby. She exhaled from her nose very slowly, trying to make as little noise as possible. She gripped the book in her hand tightly. Ever since she got it, she didn't have a chance to look at it, neither did she dare to look at it.

Hearing the shouting sounds not far from her, her limbs felt so weak they started trembling. When she was surrounded by the members from the north wing, Rena had no choice. Losing a couple of lives as she escaped from the people encircling her, she rushed into the bookshelves section but now she was experiencing the cost of her decision. Her hands and legs felt weak, she definitely wasn't in a condition to fight. She was totally exhausted after fleeing from her pursuers.

"I think I only have 2 lives now?" Rena was in dismay when she thought about the number of lives she had left. She knew that if she was hit by another strong attack, that might be it for her.

Reno, who had been communicating to his sister through his communicator, was extremely anxious and worried, "Just hold on for a bit more, I will be there soon..."

Right now, he was at a spot which could be easily seen by the South, West and East wing. If someone spotted a black shadow suddenly standing up, in front of Siri's desk, Reno knew that he would immediately become everybody's target. "I can only move slowly while I press myself against the walls. Where are you now? Are you hurt?"

Rena surveyed her surroundings. After confirming that there wasn't any sign of her pursuers hiding between the bookshelves near her, she replied softly, "No. Don't come here!"

As she said that, she wiped off the blood trickling from her face. Even if she couldn't escape, she wasn't going to endanger her brother like this. Even though she had already made such a decision, Rena felt a warm feeling around her eyes. She felt a small urge to cry. Afterall, she was just 14 and a half. She sniffed and gritted her teeth. Then, she crouched down and ran stealthily to the bookshelf on her diagonally right.

" This spot is quiet. There is no one and I can hide here." Just as Rena thought of this, her wrist was caught by a black shadow standing behind her. Feeling the slight pain on her wrist, Rena was overwhelmed with a wave of fear. She bit down on the hand, almost irrationally.

Rena didn't expect that the skin of a person's hand could be this hard. She felt as if she had bitten a diamond. Rena's gums were sore when she suddenly heard a familiar voice chiding her softly, "Are you born in the year of the dog?"

Rena immediately looked up and saw an unfamiliar face. Even though the woman's facial features looked gentle and exquisite, their combination created an inexplicable air of iciness. Rena remembered that she had seen this face amongst the people surrounding her just moments before. Staring at the woman at close proximity, Rena noticed that the woman had a pair of intense, amber cat-like eyes. She found them oddly familiar.

"Stop staring, it's me," Lin Sanjiu grumbled. "My skin finally appeared."

This time, not only Rena, but even Reno let out a long gasp over the communicator. The girl threw herself at Lin Sanjiu with her tear-glistened eyes as she protested quietly, "Why did you come? Why didn't you help me before!"

Lin Sanjiu patted her hair and did not reply. Instead, she signaled for Rena to keep quiet because she could sense from her higher consciousness scan that someone was approaching.

"You can act as bait here." Lin Sanjiu whispered to Rena before she disappeared in a flash, standing at the border of the book section. Obviously, the pursuer had some heat vision equipment. When he was near Rena, he quickly slowed down and raised the long stick-like item in his hand, then crept soundlessly toward Rena's hiding spot.

He was very sure of what he saw. The girl was alone, so he had no reason to call his teammates to share the number of lives he could obtain from the girl. Eyeing his prey just in front of him, he felt his throat tighten the next second. Crack. Before he was even aware of it, his neck had been snapped. He tried his best to turn his budging eyes behind, trying to see his killer...

Rena heard that sound and stuck her head out. She saw Lin Sanjiu standing pencil-straight behind the pursuer from the north wing. Lin Sanjiu's crushed the person's throat with her left hand so hard that he couldn't even muster a bit of strength. Lin Sanjiu watched emotionlessly as the man's lives slipped away. He became weaker and weaker until his body grew limp. Lin Sanjiu did not release her grip immediately. Instead, she held his throat and waited for another ten seconds before she withdrew her hand.

Thud. The lifeless body fell to the ground.

Without using any of her special abilities, or any special items, she killed a Posthuman, with considerable combat skills and seven lives, by her pure physical grip strength. Lin Sanjiu looked down at him as she flexed her fingers unconsciously, as if brushing away the feelings she had when she strangled that man.

"Let's go. You can handle the next person," Lin Sanjiu said to Rena softly, facing the girl in the darkness.

Rena finally started breathing normally—when she saw what had

happened, if felt as though she was being strangled as well—and quickly followed Lin Sanjiu.

"How many lives do you have now?" Lin Sanjiu asked abruptly as they slipped into another aisle between the bookshelves.

"I don't know. Two, maybe," Rena felt a weight in her heart.

"Let me see." Lin Sanjiu gestured for the girl to lift her clothes. Then, she peered at the teenage girl's back. Even though it was dark, Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness was somewhat better than a person's naked eyes. She spotted a small "14" on Rena's fair, white skin.

"Huh?" Rena could believe her ears when she heard that unexpected number. She looked at Lin Sanjiu doubtfully, "I only had a 3 before this, and I even died once..."

"Ah!" Reno suddenly exclaimed through the communicator as he listened to their conversation. "That weird creature also had multiple lives!"

"That's strange. It definitely wasn't human. How could he also be a pocket dimension participant?" Rena asked with a mixture of surprise, delight, and curiosity, while she touched her own waist.

Lin Sanjiu thought about it for some time, but, momentarily, she couldn't make sense of it.

They could discuss this later because right now she wanted to teach those people from the north wing a lesson. When Lin Sanjiu fully exploited her current advantage, her combat capabilities were extremely high. She did not have body heat, so she wouldn't appear even if the person had thermal vision equipment. She could also make use of the corpse, which had not died long ago, as a bait. On top of that, Rena had gradually regained her fighting strength. Within the following five to six minutes, Rena and Lin Sanjiu had dispatched two people.

However, mishaps were bound to occur.

The third person that they attacked wore some sort of protective Special Item. When Lin Sanjiu attacked him, not only did she miss, but he also managed to escape. While he ran away, he warned loudly, "Boss! Flinch and the rest are dead! Let's retreat!"

"Damn it!" Lin Sanjiu cursed as she chased closely behind him.

Chapter 266: South Wing

The second time Lin Sanjiu and the man in the top hat confronted each other, the positions were reversed. There were only three members left in Top Hat's team, and one of them was injured. On the other hand, Lin Sanjiu's body was nearly completed, so her strength had reached an unprecedented level. After that escapee yelled and revealed where Lin Sanjiu and Rena were, Lin Sanjiu simply gave up ambushing. She jumped to the top of a bookshelf without hesitation and sprinted toward Top Hat's group.

Even though her feet did not really touch the surface of the bookshelf, she moved so quickly that when she stopped abruptly, the draft she created over the wooden surface actually created a faint bit of white smoke. At the same time, the last syllabus from the escapee's words just faded.

Top Hat stared at the white smoke rising from Lin Sanjiu's feet. Even though he didn't make a sound, it was apparent to everyone that he had a terrible expression on his face now.

"It had only been two days, how can that skinless person's ability improve to such a degree?"

The intense aura emanating from Lin Sanjiu's body was like an abyss or a giant beast. It created such a suffocating atmosphere that Top Hat quickly made a decision even before fighting with her.

"Let's go!" he shouted to his team members on his left and right. With that, he flung a piece of gray cloth into the air.

[3D Movie Kit]

This isn't some random 3D movie created just to make more money. The content displayed to the target is a high-definition, "hyper-realistic world". The targets would feel as if they had

entered into a movie and would not be able to differentiate between what is fiction and what is real. The effect of this item is extremely useful for deception, aiding battles and escaping.

Noticing that Top Hat and his team were planning to escape, Lin Sanjiu jumped down from the bookshelves. However, she sensed a sudden slight change in the atmosphere. The next moment, she found a vine hanging over arms without any warning. She pulled it away from her arm without thinking. She was stunned when she looked up and found herself staring at a dusky, thick jungle.

The protruding tree roots under her feet felt hard and realistic. Lin Sanjiu raised her hand and brushed aside the tangle of aerial roots ahead. She looked around but she didn't see any sign of Top Hat and his people. Even though she knew that everything was an illusion, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help stopping, feeling somewhat disconcerted. The illusion was so realistic that Lin Sanjiu could not make out even any semblance of the library.

Just when Lin Sanjiu was feeling unsure as to which direction she should head in, she heard footsteps behind her. She turned behind and discovered that Rena had just stepped out from behind a few trees.

"This is... an illusion they created?" Rena said with a half-gaping mouth, "But, this effect shouldn't last for long, right?"

Lin Sanjiu really couldn't tell either. She took a few steps forwards but finally let out a sigh of resignation.

In reality, the effect of [3D Movie Set] indeed didn't last long. However, for the people from the north wing, one and a half minute was more than enough time for them to escape.

"Hey, can you hear me? Why aren't you replying?"

Reno's puzzled voice sounded once again from the communicator only when the jungle scenery disappeared from Lin Sanjiu's and Rena's eyes and they saw the familiar dimly-lit library once again.

Apparently, the [3D Movie Set] could also cut off sounds from the outside world.

"I said, the person who is wearing a helmet is running toward the south wing, can you guys hear me?"

Rena, who had been scanning her surroundings, suddenly snapped back to reality and answered her brother. Next, she looked at Lin Sanjiu and asked, "They've entered the south wing, should we continue chasing?"

The people had previously thought that Lin Sanjiu was a backup sent by the south wing. Now that they were in danger, they immediately ran to the south wing.

Lin Sanjiu shot a glance at the south wing. The south wing was dark. She could only see the vague outlines of the bookshelves. Even though they knew very well that a group of people had just entered the south wing, the south wing was unusually quiet, as if there was no one there.

"Since they have already formed an alliance, it would be difficult to deal with them," Lin Sanjiu replied. Remembering the woman from the south wing, who had only spoken but not revealed herself, Lin Sanjiu felt that the person was going to be trouble. "Forget it, since there is only three of them, I don't think they can create much of an issue."

"What should we do next?" Rena bit her lips and asked. Rena sounded a lot calmer than before. After this confrontation, they might only have a single book, but the numbers on their back had increased significantly. The number on Rena's back was now "21" and Lin Sanjiu's was "29". Reno was the only one with an unchanged number.

"Let's look for your brother before discussing about the books," Lin Sanjiu said as she walked to the banisters surrounding the north wing. "He is kinda stuck downstairs, it must be quite an ordeal..."

Before Lin Sanjiu could finish her sentence, a voice suddenly sounded from the West Wing. The voice was grating against their ears, as the person said with a raised tone, "That's not the people from the north wing. I think they headed toward the south wing!"

"The people from the west wing had been observing the situation here?" Lin Sanjiu and Rena froze for a second and immediately found a spot to hide. They kept quiet and listened for any other movements.

From the looks of it, the west wing team had only lost a single member from their battle with Silvan, and not their overall strength. From the west wing, their murmurs continued for some time before a voice suddenly yelled out, "You people from the south wing! Get out here now!"

The person who spoke was still that leader. When he raised his voice, his words pierced the eardrums of the people around him, "Did you say that we should work together? Now, I know why you didn't send anyone here to help us! You formed an alliance with the north wing! You better give me a proper explanation! What do you mean by this?"

As expected, the west wing and south wing had also formed an alliance. When Lin Sanjiu heard his words, she couldn't help looking at the south wing once more.

"That woman managed to secretly collaborate with the teams from two different wings without them knowing about each other. That is certainly some tactic..." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

However, the question from the west wing was met with absolute silence. No one replied. There was only pin-drop silence.

"They can't be feeling guilty, right?"

The mushroom man cursed loudly with his horrible, screechy voice, but the woman from the south wing did not respond at all. It was as if she had suddenly become deaf and dumb. Not only that,

there wasn't even the least bit of sound of them moving. Just when Lin Sanjiu was feeling slightly suspicious of the situation, a long terrifying, wretched scream rang out from the south wing. Suddenly, a human body was tossed into the air violently, like a ragdoll, before the victim fell heavily down once more.

A top hat flipped a few times in the air before it fell down after its owner.

Amidst the horrible screams, the snapping necks, and the sound of splattering blood, everyone heard the chilling, goosebump-raising last words from Top Hat. With blood spluttering, he screamed, "The South Wing team are—"

Splurt.

A small beam of white light shot out from the south wing, ending Top Hat's words along with his life.

"The South Wing team are?" Just when Lin Sanjiu was still baffled by what the man said, she didn't react when Silvan suddenly shouted, "There is something very wrong with this! I remember that there are two people from the south wing in the central hall. Anyone with light-producing items should just illuminate the central hall so that we can see them!"

"There are actually two people from the south wing in the central hall?"

As every team was moving independently, no one really took note of the situation in the central hall. With those words, Lin Sanjiu felt her heart rising to her throat, Rena also became anxious. "Hey!" Rena repeated over the communicator many times, but she heard nothing from Reno's side. When they thought about it carefully, they didn't know when they stopped receiving Reno's voice from the communicator.

Once Silvan said that, a beam of light came from the flashlight he was holding. The snow-white light pierced the darkness and

created a circle of light in the central hall. It immediately drew everyone's attention. When the circle of light first cruised around the central hall, it seemed empty. The light reflected off the tables and chairs with a painful intensity. However, when the beam of light reached Siri's desk, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help letting out a soft, "Ah."

Reno had already left his previous hiding spot long ago. Right now, he was holding his injured shoulder while fighting with another person. It was only when the beam of light hit the person's face that he, along with the other people in the library, noticed that person's face.

It was a bloodless face without any facial features. It was a duoluo zhong.

Chapter 267: Lin Sanjiu's Prophecy Came True

Almost at the same time that the beam of light lit the duoluozhong's featureless face, a strong gust of wind stirred in the second floor of the north wing. As a figure flew down to the central hall, it was almost as if her speed sliced through the air. With a whoosh, a rush of air spread out in all directions.

In the blink of an eye, Lin Sanjiu had already landed beside Reno. This was quickly followed by the sound of Rena racing down the stairs. She quickly stood behind her brother. With his companions by his side, the teenage boy felt a slight sense of relief.

"Why are there duoluozhongs here?" a voice filled with confusion came from the second floor of the west wing. This was the same question which puzzled everyone. A light flashed from the west wing as if the people there couldn't believe their own eyes. The item that the team used was far brighter than the flashlight that Silvan had found randomly. Half the library was instantly flooded with a white light, illuminating everything. Under this new lighting, the creature standing before them looked even stranger than before.

The duoluozhongs that crossed Lin Sanjiu's path, while she was there in Kisaragi Station, were more or less translucent. Some of them were so faint that even the edges of their body seemed to be foggy and vague. However, the duoluozhong before them certainly looked terrifyingly tangible.

The clear outline of its body, its solid pale white face, and its undeniable feeling of it being a "matter taking up space" clearly proved that it was different from the spirit-like duoluozhongs in this world. It was like a living, breathing person. The difference was that someone had removed the skin from his or her face, erased all facial features, sewn its eyes and mouth, and finally

painted that face white.

Though it did have a much lesser creepy "ghostly" factor, at first glance, its appearance certainly was hair-raising.

As the weird creature stood still in its original spot, Lin Sanjiu decided not to make any sudden movements for the time being. Snatching this opportunity, Rena quickly examined her brother's injuries. He had just accidentally torn his previous wounds so it wasn't that serious.

"Why is there only one?" Silvan raised his voice as he searched the central hall with his flashlight while standing on the second floor of the east wing. He frowned slightly. His eyelashes lowered, and a threatening aura seeped from his emerald green eyes.

When Lin Sanjiu heard his words, she didn't know why she suddenly looked up at the east wing involuntarily. The next second, she spotted Silvan's expression changing suddenly. As if he had remembered something, he turned and ran toward the stair.

"You're too late. Hehehehe!"

A crisp, repetitive toddler's giggle reverberated through the central hall out of nowhere. After they heard that sound, Lin Sanjiu and the siblings noticed the duoluo zhong in front of them shrugging its shoulders a couple of times. It was almost as if it was laughing soundlessly. Following that, the people from the west wing repositioned the light slightly upward. It was then that Lin Sanjiu and the siblings discovered that the source of the toddler's laughter was actually from the stairs leading to the second floor of the east wing.

A naked baby crawled rapidly down the stairs. His overly large head seemed like it was almost falling off. Its pair of eyes, which were practically two black holes on top of its forehead, had curved into a very awkward angle and were almost touching its mouth. There was a rectangular item in its mouth. It was a book.

The featureless duoluozhong suddenly let out a screeching laughter. It left Lin Sanjiu and the siblings and ran toward the baby. Just when Lin Sanjiu was about to chase after the duoluozhong, a furious, thunderous roar exploded. The sound was so loud that the entire library even shook a little. Rena almost fell as she lost her balance. A figure suddenly leaped down directly from the second floor of the east wing and landed with a thud. Aggression leaked from the person as he landed directly in front of the two duoluozhongs. For a second, the floorboards even hummed from the vibration of the impact.

Everything happened too fast. No one could anticipate this situation.

When Lin Sanjiu heard Silvan's angry roar, a violent, whistling gust of wind swept through the central hall as Silvan moved. The wind, along with the poor lighting, made it almost impossible for them, being on the first floor, to clearly see what was happening. Lin Sanjiu and the siblings only heard a sudden screech from the baby and the sound of falling items and bookshelves as the wind whistled. They did not know what the people in the west wing saw, but the light from their item trembled a few times.

After ten seconds, the wind stopped. Lin Sanjiu turned around and realized that only Silvan and herself were still standing.

The duoluozhong that had the appearance of a baby had already been shredded. It became a few columns of smoke which finally dissipated into the air. Suddenly, there was some slight commotion from the south wing. Shortly after, a pale white figure trembled as it rushed back to the south wing. Silvan looked up and watched as the duoluozhong escaped. He did not move.

In a rather embarrassing manner, Rena and Reno crawled up from the floor and stood up. Silvan turned to look at Lin Sanjiu and the siblings. Then, he said softly, as if explaining to someone, "Peach is dead."

He turned back and picked up the book on the floor before striding toward them. Lin Sanjiu sensed the shock from the siblings behind her. However, as he walked closer to them, his expression grew clearer in the light. The two teens eventually relaxed a little.

Lin Sanjiu let out a silent sigh.

"Here. This is for you."

When Silvan was just a few steps away from Lin Sanjiu, he had already regained his composure. As he raised his hand offering Lin Sanjiu the book, he looked into her eyes. His shadow moved along with his gesture, and the light moved across his face in an eye-catching manner.

Lin Sanjiu looked at the book in his hand. It was the "A Detailed Guide to Forensic Reconstruction of Dinosaur Fossils" book. It was one of the target books. Lin Sanjiu immediately took the book from him without any hesitation but asked, "Why?"

"Did you forget what you said?" A faint bitter smile appeared on Silvan's face. This was the first time Lin Sanjiu had seen such an expression. "I came to join your team," he said.

The siblings behind Lin Sanjiu gasped.

"I am sure that Siri's rules don't include mergers between two teams..." Lin Sanjiu found herself in a difficult position. She tried to decline him, but Silvan interrupted her with a hard stance. "The number of lives doesn't matter to me."

"He doesn't want 25 lives?" Lin Sanjiu wanted to say more but, unexpectedly, the two teens behind her suddenly became very excited.

"Let him come with us!"

"He is a good person."

They said repeatedly. Considering this situation, Lin Sanjiu

wasn't in the position to reject Silvan.

The verbal exchanges between the two and Silvan were just very unusual. Lin Sanjiu did not really know how to deal with the man, so she simply responded with a stiff expression and said coldly, "You better not act alone."

Silvan drew his golden hair together and gave a casual grin. His seemingly carefree attitude was ironically very charismatic.

"You... you were so angry just a few minutes ago..." Rena suddenly questioned. Her eyes were sparkling and she used an oddly cautious tone, "Is Peach your, uh, girlfriend?"

"I met her outside the library," Silvan patted Rena's head gently. Surprisingly, she stood still and let him pat her. The sight was simply astonishing. "I promised her that we would earn some lives here... I couldn't keep my promise."

"Does he act like that to all women?" Lin Sanju couldn't help thinking.

However, when Silvan talked to her now, his previous strange attitude had fully disappeared. If it didn't make such a strong impression on her previously, she would have thought that she was imagining things. However, these were all unimportant, because when Silvan handed Lin Sanjiu that book, they all knew that they had to get away from the west wing's line of sight. Perhaps, the people from the west wing were too startled, so escaping their line of sight was easier than they thought. When all of them had successfully hidden among the bookshelves in the central hall, they started planning their next step.

"From what I know about the mushroom heads from the west wing," Silvan said lazily as he leaned on a bookshelf with his arms crossed, "considering the circumstances, they will choose to just wait and see. The most annoying thing about them is that they will always support the winning side."

"The third book had also been found. Who is it with?" Reno asked hurriedly. "South wing?"

"That's my guess," Silvan nodded. "I was wondering, what did you guys manage to find out from Siri?" he asked with a smile.

Chapter 268: The Twelve Worlds Centrum Is An Extraordinary Place

"We just followed what you did," Lin Sanjiu replied blandly as she looked up and threw a glance at her new team member. "We asked Siri a couple of questions. But, before we discuss this, I want to ask you a question."

Lin Sanjiu wasn't really bothered by the question she was about to ask, but now found it necessary, just based on the fact that Silvan actually joined their group.

The blond man tilted his head curiously; his expression was a little like a puppy.

"Where are your teammates?"

Silvan paused for a second and seemed somewhat shocked. Then, he rubbed his head of fluffy gold hair and exhaled, "Are you asking this because you know that the Munition Factory always operates in teams, or because you've seen me before?"

Before Lin Sanjiu could reply, he suddenly laughed, "Oh, you must have seen me before."

"How can you be so sure?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help asking.

"Well, I can feel that you don't have a good impression of me," Silvan looked childish when he tilted his head, grinning. Even in the darkness, his teeth looked white. "Yeah, basically, very few women refuse to tell me their names."

It was obvious to all of them that he tried to be modest when he said that.

That was just the honest truth. That didn't only apply to females. After a short conversation, Reno quickly told Silvan his name and his hometown. Thankfully, the two kids were still clear-headed and rational. They withheld sensitive information such as their

abilities and Lin Sanjiu's name.

Lin Sanjiu had no interest to reveal her name to other people who came from the Twelve Worlds Centrum. She only gave a slight dismissive hum, "I've seen you before, but don't try to change the subject. Where are your previous teammates?"

"They've died in the line of duty," though his voice sounded just as pleasing, his answer sounded much colder.

Lin Sanjiu was stunned. "Was that residential building that hard to deal with?"

"Regarding that matter, we can slowly talk about it after we leave this place," Silvan did not ask Lin Sanjiu when she had seen him. He lowered his head so that his fringe cast a shadow over his eyes, "Now, tell me, what did you ask Siri?"

Reno cleared his throat, "Siri only informed us about a few rules, so we organized our thoughts and came up with many questions. We simply asked her each of those questions one by one."

First, Reno asked Siri if she knew the location of the target books that had already been found.

Siri replied that she didn't know.

"Now, I am sure the third book is with the people from the south wing," Reno said with an excited expression. "Even if Siri doesn't know, it doesn't affect us. I was shocked when she answered my next question. Weren't you guys worried about the people in the west wing? Just wait and see."

The teenage boy coughed. He looked rather enthusiastic. Before the others could react, he suddenly shouted, "Siri, can you announce the number of people in each team?"

All of them were shocked. No one expected Reno to suddenly ask that question. This was quickly followed by Siri's monotonous voice which rang out over the speakers, "Okay. Central Hall, three members. West Wing, four members. East Wing, one member.

South Wing, eleven members."

Right after Siri said "eleven members", a commotion was instantly created. Even though Lin Sanjiu and her team were more or less mentally prepared, they were quite taken aback when they heard what Siri said and almost suspected that they had heard her wrong. Siri's report clearly referred to the number of people who were still alive. If they were to add the duoluozhong that Rena and Silvan had killed previously, the south wing actually started out with thirteen members.

Lin Sanjiu couldn't believe that so many duoluozhongs would just obediently stay upstairs.

The people from the west wing cut loose a barrage of expletives, "What the f*ck? They have way more members than us, how are we supposed to fight?"

"They're duoluozhongs! How did they manage to infiltrate this place?"

Coincidentally, Siri heard that particular remark made by someone and she replied emotionlessly, "Anyone with a number on their back can join one of the five teams in this event. This is not limited to specific species."

"So, Siri can be used like this. How interesting." The woman from the south wing made a sudden comment. The commotion stopped instantly. The woman's voice was a little deep and she dragged her words. It was difficult to imagine that a duoluozhong could speak in that manner.

"But, it's alright. Although we lost two members, we are definitely going to earn all the lives," the woman declared after laughing.

"Why can duoluozhongs enter a pocket dimension?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help asking Silvan.

Apart from Lin Sanjiu, all the posthumans present were from the

Twelve Worlds Centrum. Evidently, duoluozhongs entering a pocket dimension wasn't something shocking to them.

"Low-level duoluozhongs are like normal humans. They can't enter a pocket dimension and they can't go to another world," Silvan gave Lin Sanjiu a quick glance and whispered, "But, duoluozhongs can also evolve."

Lin Sanjiu immediately remembered the flying duoluozhongs she had seen in Hyperthermal Hell. She could feel the blonde man's warm breath down her neck and she rubbed her neck unconsciously as if to erase that sensation.

"Since the other team has so many more members, I think the mushroom heads will be willing to help us," Silvan said acidly as he stood up. He turned to Reno and smiled, "Now I know why you said we don't have to worry about them."

With this morale boost, the teenage boy grinned and added, "There's more!" After that, he began telling the team all the information he had obtained. Though Lin Sanjiu came up with the idea to ask Siri more questions, she didn't expect that Reno could dig out that much information. With that information, they managed to come up with a plan.

"Right now, the South Wing team already know that we have two books, so, we will be their main target. Meanwhile, the West Wing team had also switched off their light," Lin Sanjiu stressed as if to reaffirm their plan. "We will move in pairs. I will team up with Rena. Reno, go with him... We need to avoid their attacks and search the main areas mentioned in Siri's clue. But, we don't know the English title of the last book, so it is a bit troublesome."

"Speaking of which..." Silvan suddenly said softly before he removed a small detachable part of his battle goggles. After that, he said a line of fluent English. He instantly sounded different from before. His words did not have that sort of strange enunciation.

Lin Sanjiu was stunned. Silvan slowly replaced the detachable part back on his goggles and smiled at her, "What were you saying?"

Lin Sanjiu sighed, "Nothing."

"The Twelve Worlds Centrum is an extraordinary place."

Chapter 269: The Fourth Book

Q: "Siri, if nobody finds the five books even after a long time, what would happen?"

A: "In that case, the book searching event would just continue... until the books are found. Or until the number of days that have passed exceeds the total amount of lives that every participant has. Then, everyone's lives will be deducted all at once."

Q: "Doesn't that mean that everyone would die?"

A: "After that, I would open the doors once again and invite the next batch of readers to join the event."

Q: "Okay. If a team gathers all five books but does not verify them with you, what will happen?"

A: "It will be treated as if no team had won yet."

Q: "That means the verification process is a necessary step. Must we come over to your work desk to verify the books? If I raise five books in the air and show them to you, will that suffice?"

A: "No."

Q: "Well, then can you tell me what is the total cumulative lives of all the surviving people in the library have right now?"

A: "Yes."

Q: "Then, tell me!"

A: "522."

Q: "Huh, that much... Can you tell me how many lives each individual person have?"

A: "No. This does not directly affect the length of the book searching event."

Q: "Anyway, you can put things in whatever way you want. How did the location of the five target books disappear from the

library's system?"

A: "The librarian of this library enjoys reading. When the library was closed, she would spend the whole day in it. She would have a book in her hand wherever she went, whether she was eating or just taking an afternoon nap. It might be because she had been too lax, but she finally discovered that five books were missing only after some time."

Q: "You must be that librarian!"

A: "No comment."

Under the cover of the darkness, Lin Sanjiu and Rena approached a corner of the library quickly and stealthily. They stopped and listened for any movements in the corridor behind the wall.

From the clues Reno gathered after talking to Siri, they basically came to the conclusion that the librarian had lost the five target books during her leisure time, moving around the library. The books that were found in the reading sections and the multimedia section seemed to prove their conjecture. Since Siri mentioned "eating and taking a nap", it seemed to hint that the librarian was living a normal everyday life. However, there wasn't any canteen in the library...

Lin Sanjiu scanned their surroundings and found nothing unusual, then gestured to Rena. The two of them slipped into the corridor. In the darkness, a lit green sign with the words "washroom" hung above their heads.

After their team split up in pairs, Silvan pulled down his personal ballistic eyewear and covered half his face. Somehow, that action left a lasting impression. "Let's have a chat with the people in the west wing." He placed his arm casually over Reno's shoulder as if both of them had already known each other for years.

"You both should be careful when you are searching for books, the south wing is way too quiet." Lin Sanjiu remembered Silvan's

advice when she and Rena pushed open the thick wooden door to the female washroom. Controlling their strength, the wooden door opened soundlessly. A dull yellow light lit the washroom. Though the wattage of light wasn't that high, it was undamaged. They could see the basins, hand dryer, and cubicles in the silent washroom.

After a sweeping glance to guarantee no one was around, Rena felt slightly relieved. She closed the wooden door and mumbled quietly, "I hope the book is in this washroom..."

This was already the fourth washroom they had searched. After they had searched the two female washrooms in the Central Hall, they headed to the second floor of the east wing. If they still couldn't find any books, Lin Sanjiu was seriously considering checking the male washrooms.

"Are we going to search the cubicles individually?"

As they did not meet anyone on their way there, Rena lowered her guard. She walked into one of the cubicles without even checking and grumbled, "It is disgusting to search around these toilet cubicles. Siri is really..."

Lin Sanjiu walked into the second cubicle and answered her offhandedly, while she placed the cover of a toilet bowl down. Then, she checked the space behind the toilet bowl.

"Hey, are you really going to keep your name from big brother Silvan?" Searching for a target book certainly didn't deter Rena from small talk, "There aren't many gentlemen like him. Besides, not everyone from the Twelve Worlds Centrum works for Puppeteer..."

"I'd rather not. I think it is fine if you call me just Jiu."

Perhaps, during her time in the Garden of Eden, Gong Daoyi's unpredictability had left her very unsettled. As a result, Lin Sanjiu just couldn't bring herself to trust Silvan, who was also very

attractive-looking. Furthermore, she didn't think well of the man's uniform attitude of gentleness to all the women around him.

After Rena checked the first cubicle, she walked past Lin Sanjiu and entered the third cubicle, "Ugh! This is so dirty! I've heard that female toilets are way dirtier than male toilets, maybe I'm witnessing it right now..."

"These young kids always seem to have an endless amount of energy. No matter how many battles they fought, and how many wounds they'd gotten. After some rest, they immediately go back to their lively, bubbly selves." Lin Sanjiu thought to herself and smiled faintly.

She didn't find anything in her current cubicle. When she left, Lin Sanjiu looked behind the cubicle door, checking conveniently.

She found a female satchel bag hanging from the hook on the door.

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling excited. She reached for it and took it down. From the feeling of the PU leather of the bag, she could feel a something thick inside the bag. Lin Sanjiu opened the bag and found a book as expected. She pulled out the book and looked at the title under the light. It was "The Heart-Stealing Consort Escapes With a Baby".

Just as she averted her eyes from the cover of the book, Siri's muffled voice sounded over the speaker through the corridor and the wooden door. "Progress report: the fourth book has been found."

Lin Sanjiu couldn't contain her delight as she exhaled and a smile appeared on her face, "That's great. Now, we only need the last book... I don't think we will find another book in a washroom. Let's find for a spot that is suitable for an afternoon nap."

Looking at the book in her hand again, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help joking, "Say, it's quite appropriate to find this book in a toilet

cubicle."

After she said that, Lin Sanjiu suddenly realized that something was amiss.

The washroom was too quiet.

Her body stiffened as she looked at the gap under the divider between the cubicle she was in and the adjacent cubicle. She saw a pair of donned red leather high-heels. The person was standing in the same spot that Rena was just moments before. Almost as if she or it noticed Lin Sanjiu looking, the pair of feet took a step back as if ready to bend down.

Chapter 270: Time For The Decisive Fight

"To be honest, the way you people behave is a little irritating."

After lifting the cover of the toilet bowl in front of her, Lin Sanjiu saw a pool of dirty-looking water. It looked gross, and there was also suspicious-looking dark yellow streaks on the toilet seat. This wasn't the best scenery, but a duoluo zhong had already been kneeling in front of this toilet for some unknown length of time.

"Let's just set aside the issue of whether you guys are even scary, you are just acting like idiots."

As a clear icy female voice rang out. Lin Sanjiu placed her bare foot on a head wrapped in black hair. Soon after, the head was brutally forced into the toilet bowl with a thud. As the water in the toilet bowl splashed out, Lin Sanjiu quickly withdrew her feet.

She placed her hands into her pants pocket as she floated behind a long-haired spirit duoluo zhong which was wearing a pair of red high heels. Lin Sanjiu was expressionless.

"Hey! Did I say you could lift your head up?" Lin Sanjiu was now acting like a bona fide female delinquent. Her voice was filled with an obnoxious hostility, "Stuff your ugly face back in there!"

As the spirit's head was fully wrapped, Lin Sanjiu couldn't tell where its face was, or whether it was really ugly. When the spirit heard Lin Sanjiu's words, it made something like a soft whimper. Before Lin Sanjiu could kick it again, it dumped its entire head into the toilet bowl filled with filthy water.

"Now, it looks much better," Lin Sanjiu praised, but her voice was brimming with anger and aggression. It was obvious that she was running out of patience. "Now, answer me. Where is the girl who came in with me?"

The spirit, who was commonly described in urban legends as a woman who wears a mouth mask and red high heels, had her face

in the toilet bowl, so she had no choice but to brush aside her hair at the back of her head. A mouth full of sharp teeth was revealed. It opened and closed with threads of saliva, "She has been pulled into the wall by a wall spirit..."

"See, what did I say?" Lin Sanjiu could feel the veins on her forehead throbbing, even though she sounded calmer, "You never give proper answers. You guys are really very annoying."

"No. No. I haven't finished. I mean, usually, when a person is pulled into a wall by a wall spirit, they would be trapped and would then suffocate in the wall..." the mouth which looked disgusting from all angles spoke, "But, you don't have to worry. The wall spirit should have transported her to the south wing."

"Why?"

"So, we can get your books..."

Hearing Lin Sanjiu's calmer voice, the spirit slowly lifted her head a little. If it could just catch the right opportunity with Lin Sanjiu's guard down, her mouth could get a little closer to that woman, and this would definitely change the current circumstances. "We don't have that many lives. Our leader thinks that you guys must be related, so you won't just leave the girl to her own devices. That's why... that's why we planned to use her to exchange for your books."

Lin Sanjiu inferred that their leader was the woman who drags her words. Their leader's guess about them being "related" was far from the truth.

"What sort of spirit is your... leader?"

"I really don't know! I have never seen her face. She always wears a hooded cape and a Changpao (traditional Chinese male clothes). And, we haven't seen her fight..." the spirit reacted hastily, probably because it was very afraid that Lin Sanjiu might have a misunderstanding. "Her face is totally covered..."

Lin Sanjiu frowned her brows as she ruminated. While she considered something, she peeked out of the cubicle, as if to confirm that no one was heading this way. At that very moment, she heard a gust of wind behind her back, directed at her neck.

The next second, the spirit which tried to hit Lin Sanjiu with a sneak attack froze in mid-air.

"Have I forgotten to tell you something?" Lin Sanjiu remarked coldly as she raised one of her brows. She had grabbed the spirit by its neck, stopping it while the spirit tried to attack her by rushing toward her in reverse. Lin Sanjiu could only see the back of the spirit's head and its spine. She watched as the spirit struggled non-stop, seemingly unable to understand the situation it was in.

"Actually, I am not technically alive."

"Look, I am floating now... When I kicked you, I didn't use any Special Item. I just used my bare foot."

Lin Sanjiu was an existence that lay right on the boundary between that of the living and the spirits.

After giving that curt pop-science explanation, Lin Sanjiu tightened her grip. The spirit was crushed like a soda crack. The crumbs of its essence disappeared in the air slowly. After the spirit was eradicated, the washroom was silent. It was as if nothing of that sort had ever existed. Lin Sanjiu's worried expression suddenly melted away from her face. She cocked her head, thought for a moment and even smiled.

She walked in front of a basin, lifted her shirt and looked at the back of her waist in the mirror. The number had already turned to "43".

"I hope Silvan and Reno are being as successful..."

After Lin Sanjiu converted the book into a card, she mumbled to herself as she walked out of the washroom. The moment she stepped out of the door, Siri's voice sounded clearly over the

speaker, "Progress report: the fifth book has been found."

"Did Silvan and Reno find that book? Or did the people from the south wing get their hands on it?"

Lin Sanjiu became anxious. Giving up on hiding her presence, she sped to the central hall using her maximum speed.

As she heard the sound of the wind whizzing past her, she also heard every single word from Siri's announcement.

"As of now, all five books have been found. Would the team that had gathered all five books come to my work desk for verification. Before verification, your lives will be deducted at the same rate with each passing day.

Once Lin Sanjiu reached the central hall, she immediately found a hiding spot. Following that, she spotted two people running down from the west wing through her higher consciousness scanning. They were Silvan and Reno.

"Who found the fifth book? Did the west wing agree with our plan?" Lin Sanjiu asked without missing a beat.

"They agreed, with the condition that they would have all the lives from the members of the south wing," Silvan replied and waved the book in his hand. He laughed suddenly without any obvious reason. Before Lin Sanjiu could question him, he looked around Lin Sanjiu. Both Silvan and Reno realized that Rena was missing. With some nervousness, Reno asked promptly, "Rena?"

Lin Sanjiu nodded her head. Reno exhaled and didn't say another word.

Luckily, things were working out according to their plan. With Silvan's "How to Render", they already collected four target books. Lin Sanjiu took the book and gazed for a few seconds at the long English title of the book. Suddenly, they heard the woman from the south wing speaking:

"Amazing," she said slowly in a composed voice. "You got all the

books in such a short time."

Lin Sanjiu's group did not say anything. A few figures dropped from the second floor of the west wing and landed not far from them.

"This is the current situation. We need the books and you need your member back.

"You should have thought about that... Let's make a deal."

The woman from the south wing laughed softly.

Lin Sanjiu held her breath and exchanged a quick glance with Silvan reflexively.

The decisive fight in the library would begin now.

Chapter 271: Too Many Physical Fights And One Almost Forgets This Ability

"Bang!"

A bright fireball was shot into the center of the library. It stopped mid-air. The light from it instantly tore through part of the darkness. The library was now partially lit. After confirming that the ball of light hanging from the ceiling had stabilized, the leader who looked like a mushroom gave Lin Sanjiu a dry laugh, "Right now, this is the only help we can provide."

Reno instantly made a scoffing snort.

According to the South Wing team's request, each of them had to move at least 500 meters from their current position. They demanded that only one person approached Siri's work desk to hand over the target books to them. The South Wing team would only release Rena after they got and verified the books. In the south wing woman's words: "Since we all have long-distance attacks, it is always better to have a little assurance."

They did not know if it was part of the south wing woman's plan, but once the woman laid out her demands—much like how Silvan described with slight contempt—the west wing team, who had already agreed to work with Lin Sanjiu's team, suddenly became overly cautious.

"We don't care which of you get the books," said rapidly the leader from the west wing, in his horrible sounding voice. "Though we agreed to attack those duoluo zhongs in the south wing together with the condition that we got their lives... Now, you have a hostage with them. Rescuing that hostage is not within what we agreed upon."

In other words, the West Wing team seemed like they would only step in to help after Lin Sanjiu's team resolved the hostage

situation and were able to attack the duoluozhongs from the south wing.

Silvan winked at Reno, showing an "I mentioned it before, they're really annoying" face.

As they didn't place much hope on the team from the west wing, Lin Sanjiu wasn't that bothered by it. She eyed the West Wing team for a second and said mildly, "Since you guys are not willing to help, you better curb yourselves. If you try to attack us before we get our member back, don't blame us for being hostile."

Apparently, the leader from the west wing did not have a proper gauge of Lin Sanjiu's combat capabilities, so he had a slight look of despise on his face. However, Silvan was standing on her side, so he could only harumph and said nothing more.

Lin Sanjiu also stopped talking. She held four books in her arms and said to the man and the teenage boy behind her, "I'll go."

"Be careful," Silvan flashed a smile at her from behind his ballistic eyewear. His teeth were dazzlingly white. On the other hand, Reno nodded his head, looking slightly nervous.

Lin Sanjiu quickly covered the distance between her starting position and Siri's work desk. Under the poor lighting, Lin Sanjiu stopped and looked up.

"I've arrived. The books are here!" she shouted out. Her crisp voice resonated through the walls of the library. Then, she suddenly raised her voice and yelled, "Get down here!"

There was total silence for half a second.

"Oh, you're one hot-tempered lady."

The woman from the south wing laughed. Different from before, her voice suddenly became very airy, as if it was coming from all directions. No one could tell where it came from and her position. After she said that, the atmosphere in the library changed in an instant.

It was somewhat indescribable. Even though the intensity of light from the light source did not change, it was as if someone had adjusted some sort of light filter, creating a stronger sense of eeriness in the library. This discomforting atmosphere slowly spread. Something that had been hiding beneath the facade of normalcy was about to tear through this "reality". At that instant, everyone almost couldn't believe their eyes.

A grayish thing slowly peeked out from the corner of the ceiling and crawled down the wall like a gecko. The eyes of a person in an oil painting hanging on a wall suddenly moved. Next, that person jumped out of the picture frame, leaving only an empty landscape painting behind. A face suddenly emerged from a wall. It glided across the surface of the walls and floor and finally reached Siri's work desk.

Very quickly, nine different types of duoluo zhong surrounded Lin Sanjiu, trapping her in the middle. Lin Sanjiu held the books and did not move. She took a look at each of them.

"Where's my team member?" Lin Sanjiu did not see Rena, neither did the female leader of the south wing reveal herself. Lin Sanjiu shouted, "Come out! At least, you need to let me confirm that she is alive and well!"

After a moment of hesitation, the south wing woman laughed and agreed, "Okay."

A slim figure slowly walked out from the seemingly impenetrable darkness engulfing the second floor of the south wing. As the spirit in the toilet had described, the person who appeared was dressed in a Changpao and was wearing a hooded cape which concealed the person's appearance fully. If it wasn't for her height and her narrower shoulders, it was almost impossible to tell her gender.

Rena's arms were bound, so the teenage girl simply followed the woman down the stairs. When they reached the middle of the stairs, the south wing woman stopped and chuckled, "We'll stop

here."

Lin Sanjiu looked up at them.

From where she was standing, she was about 400 meters from the stairs. If there were no obstructions, she could cover that distance in the blink of an eye. However, she was now surrounded by nine duoluozhongs with indeterminate strength.

"Put the books on the desk," the south wing woman requested, eyeing the work. "Step aside and let my people check those books."

The strange woman with some part of her skin still undeveloped appeared to sigh. Then, she stacked the four books on the work desk. The duoluozhong standing beside her had a very strange form which seemed to be constantly changing. It roughly checked through all four books, and then it placed the book in its hand—if that could be considered a hand—next to the four books.

Siri appeared to be totally unconcerned about the situation in front of her. She only reacted when the five books were placed directly in front of her. As if following a command, she reached out for the books and started checking them. As she announced the results of her verification one after another, Rena bent over abruptly, as if she couldn't accept their massive failure.

While the woman, wrapped in her cape, straightened her back, her gaze swept through the library over and over again. The other posthumans did not move from their spot. Even the tall, muscular man did not show any signs of acting up.

"How to Render... No, this book isn't right." Siri monotonous voice paused suddenly. Subsequently, she added, "Out of the five books, one of them isn't the target book. The current verification process had been canceled, the event continues."

"What—" The woman in the hooded cape blurted out.

In that split second, everyone stirred. The south wing woman reached behind, trying to grab Rena with her clawed hands.

However, she was stunned when she saw a few pieces of paper in front of Rena, who was still bending over.

There were many words on the pieces of paper, and they seemed to be torn pages from a book. When the woman noticed a card in the teenage girl's hand, the card had already changed into a few more book pages.

"Hehe, my apologies." As Rena's let out a faint gleeful snicker, flashes of bright white light appeared without warning before the woman in the cape.

Chapter 272: King Vs. King

Q: "Siri, I am back. I still have a few last questions."

A: "Go ahead."

Q: "If one out of the five books that a group has gathered is incorrect, what would happen when they verify the books with you?"

A: "All five target books must be collected and presented together. Otherwise, the verification will fail and the event will continue."

Q: "Okay, in that case, would the four correct and verified target books be attributed to that particular team?"

A: "No, that would not count. Once the verification process is canceled, it means that the status quo remains, namely, none of the books are verified."

Q: "I see... There is still one most important question."

A: "..."

Q: "Is there any way to know the content of a book without activating its effect?"

A: "Yes."

The moment all the nine duoluozhongs attacked at once, the color from everything around them suddenly faded. Everything became white and warped. A sharp gust of wind brushed past her back, and Lin Sanjiu didn't even know where it came from. Even though she couldn't really see what it was, she felt a creepy, uneasy sensation crawling up the skin of her legs.

When Siri took the "How to Render" book and before she laid eyes on it, Lin Sanjiu already took a deep breath and activated her ability in her mind. At the same time, the sweat-covered card

which Rena had been holding changed into thin pieces of book pages. At that moment, the spirit duoluozhongs around Lin Sanjiu still hadn't noticed anything out of the ordinary. Lin Sanjiu shot a glance at the person standing at the stairs and then back at Siri.

When Siri saw the book, her mouth opened, preparing to say something... Lin Sanjiu had already smashed her fist violently at the constantly morphing duoluozhong. At the same time, Siri announced that the verification process had been canceled. As Lin Sanjiu had prepared herself for the situation beforehand, her attack threw the thing a few meters away from her. Lin Sanjiu turned back and swept her arms across the four books on the table. With a white light, the four books were converted subsequently into her cards and she snatched them.

Lin Sanjiu didn't even care to look at the book in Siri's hand. Even though that book was very similar to the book that Silvan had with him, one of the words within the long title was different. That was more than enough to trick a duoluozhong.

Once Lin Sanjiu had the cards in her hand, she suddenly leaped up before she even had the time to look down. Following which, a black shadow swept past the spot where her ankles were at just moments before. Meanwhile, flashes of white light suddenly erupted from the stairs. Amidst the white light, two figures rushed toward the stairs; they were Reno and Silvan.

It was only then that Lin Sanjiu finally stopped holding her breath.

The critical part of their plan was for Rena to switch from being "hostage" to a "ticking time bomb". Considering the white light from the stairs, one of the few book pages have been activated. But, no one knew how the effect of a passage of that romance novel would affect the woman in the hooded cape.

"Fate had inadvertently led me to meet him. Many years later, on a winter day, I couldn't help smiling while reminiscing about the past. Those years of young love were too bright. They were so

bright that, in contrast, the rest of my life became dull and colorless."

"From those words, it should at least have a blinding effect, right?" As this uncertain thought surfaced in Lin Sanjiu's mind, she suddenly couldn't move. She had been stopped forcefully. Behind her, black hair poured down from the ceiling, blocking the light. When the strands of hairs were about to touch Lin Sanjiu's shoulders, she fell to the ground and rolled away.

Boom! The explosion sound was very weird. For a moment, it was so loud that it sounded like it could destroy the world, then it became very soft as if just a passing breeze. This weird sound was accompanied by whirring shockwaves which started appearing. Coincidentally, one of the shockwaves brushed past Lin Sanjiu back and hit the long black hair hanging in the air. The hair was cut to bits and suddenly something made an indistinct scream.

Shortly after, a teenage girl's sharp voice rang out, "No! It's useless!"

Lin Sanjiu felt her heart tighten.

This time, that incredibly powerful attack was also from the pages in Rena's hand. The attack was very powerful probably because the passage described the intense emotions that an artist from the Romantic period felt when he was first sent to a battlefield. The attack was not only very powerful, but it had a wide area of effect. A few of the spirits who were unprepared for the attack instantly turned to smoke once they got hit by a shockwave from the attack. Though the West Wing team was quite far from the epicenter of the attack, they were flung far away despite trying to use all sorts of means to defend themselves.

Yet, such an attack was totally useless against that woman?

From Lin Sanjiu's view, she could see a few figures approaching her. The person leading the group was Reno. As he ran, he hurled his pages of almanac behind. He was quickly followed by a tall

figure, Silvan. Lin Sanjiu could see that he was carrying a smaller person on his shoulders, it was Rena.

In the distance, a person in a hooded cape slowly stood up amidst the smoke and rubble of the destroyed stairs.

She dusted her Changpao and her sleeves rolled off her hands slightly. That was the first time Lin Sanjiu saw that woman's hand. It was a fair, dainty hand which certainly looked very human.

"I have to admire your bravery."

When Reno stopped beside Lin Sanjiu, panting, the woman in the hooded cape also started to speak slowly. She acted as if the chaos around her had nothing to do with her. She even laughed faintly for a second. Her voice echoed, "Handing me those books obediently was really your best choice."

"Rena lost some lives," Silvan whispered, and that immediately drew Lin Sanjiu's attention away from the woman. "So, the west wing team needs to come back."

The previous shockwaves killed a few duoluozhongs and the remaining duoluozhongs were stopped by the members from the west wing. For now, working with Lin Sanjiu's group seemed safer than with that scheming woman in the hooded cape.

Lin Sanjiu threw a quick glance at Rena, who had temporarily lost her ability to fight. Lin Sanjiu nodded at Silvan to thank him for looking after the siblings before she smiled at Reno, "You guys take care of Rena. Wait for me."

Rena was stunned, "You're going alone?"

The woman in a hooded cape suddenly moved. In a blink of an eye, she had already approached them. Lin Sanjiu didn't have the time to answer. She leaped up and took the woman head-on. The two women collided strongly in mid-air. The impact was so strong that it created a thunderous boom.

"I think she will come back very quickly," Silvan crossed his arms

and smiled at Reno.

Chapter 273: The Woman And The Mirror

After the two people collided in mid-air, they quickly split apart. When they landed on the ground, the two people made two shocking remarks respectively:

"You're not alive—"

"You are alive!"

In that instant, it was as if they had their roles reversed. The woman who was the leader of the spirits was ironically a human made of flesh and blood. Compared to Lin Sanjiu, she was a true, genuine human. When the two collided, Lin Sanjiu felt the body warmth radiating from under the woman's hooded cape.

However, that was not what shocked Lin Sanjiu the most.

Lin Sanjiu, with her higher consciousness body, was no longer that smoke-like brain she was in the start. Her body had been condensed and strengthened to an extreme level. She had rushed toward that woman with a few tonnes of impact force. Even her regular punch was sufficient to cause significant damage because her fists were as hard as a diamond. However, the woman seemed unfazed, like she could not feel anything at all.

Lin Sanjiu, instead, was hurt from the recoil of the impact. This was the first time Lin Sanjiu felt any recoil from her attack since her body was completed.

"I didn't expect that," the south wing woman said softly. "What are you? You don't seem like a duoluo zhong. Um, but you don't seem like a creation from someone's ability either."

Lin Sanjiu's face stiffened and she didn't say a word. Her opponent was still hidden by her dark, black cape. Other than a fleeting glimpse of her hand, the woman had not even revealed a strand of hair.

Without making any unnecessary remarks, Lin Sanjiu rushed

forward without warning. This time, she fully utilized the advantages she had fighting with her higher consciousness body. Her body was like a sturdy fortress yet could also be as lithe as smoke. When her fist was about to hit the caped woman's face, Lin Sanjiu's arms suddenly twisted in an angle that was impossible for a normal human, and she aimed her fist at the woman's abdomen. Just as before, she used an overwhelming amount of strength.

However, Lin Sanjiu was shocked that her unpredictable manner of attack was useless against the woman. The caped woman did not even bother to dodge and just allowed Lin Sanjiu's fist to sink deep into her abdomen.

Nobody with a normal body made of flesh and bones could receive this sort of blow unscathed. Lin Sanjiu was confident that if she landed this punch on Puppeteer, Hei Zeji or Silvan, it would definitely cause some harm. Unfortunately, the sensation she felt from her fist wasn't quite right—

Lin Sanjiu was very sure she hit her target as she felt the woman's soft abdomen through her fist. She could clearly even feel the movement of the woman's organs from the impact point. Lin Sanjiu was puzzled by the woman's nonchalance but, the next second, she felt a vicious blow hit her own stomach.

The strength of that attack was almost as powerful as her own punch. Lin Sanjiu was immediately flung into mid-air. She had never received such a powerful blow before. If there were blood running through her higher consciousness body, she would definitely be spitting blood now. Even with a body as strong as a diamond, she felt her abdomen muscles quiver from the impact.

Lin Sanjiu somersaulted in mid-air and stopped the backward momentum. Lin Sanjiu held her stomach as she landed back on the ground. Her expression turned grim.

"This is your ability?" She quietly examined the caped woman from head to toe, "You can reflect an attack directed at you back to

your attacker?"

If that was the case, everything could be explained. Rena must have activated another stronger book page after the first one seemed to be ineffective. The teenage girl definitely couldn't anticipate that the stronger the attack, the greater the damage she would receive, so she lost one life.

"You aren't stupid," the caped woman said with a casual tone. "You're correct. I don't mind telling you the details."

[Mirror]

No female can imagine living without this item. However, meeting someone with this ability in battle isn't good news.

As the name implies, the owner of Mirror can reflect attacks. Using a less than apt metaphor, just as a mirror reflects lights, an enemy's attack would be reflected back. The more powerful the attack is, the stronger the reflected attack. However, the reflected attack would never be stronger than the original.

"I can also tell you something," the caped woman smiled. "When I activate this ability, I will not feel anything when your attack lands on me.

"I can just stand here without moving and let you just hit me. Oh, it not only works with your fist. I can also reflect any Special Item effects, evolved abilities, and others. Whatever it is, it will still work. However, I am worried that before the battle even ends, you would be killed by all of your own attacks," she gradually raised the tone of her voice, as if to show pity.

"Can't you understand? I can attack you but you can't attack me. That being said, everyone here is practically dead if I want it... You better hand over the books to me now! My ability could be the most formidable ability in all apocalyptic worlds because it doesn't have a weakness!"

After she said the last word, the caped woman's loud voice

echoed through the library. Everyone heard her penetrating, clear voice and their faces turned pale.

"How can I defeat someone like this?" Lin Sanjiu had a disheartening thought but immediately repressed it. She absolutely wouldn't allow herself to just accept the current situation as it is.

Lin Sanjiu watched the caped woman standing in the dim light and she quickly thought through what the woman said. She felt like a fox which was trying to deal with a hedgehog with steel spines. She did not know how she could attack the woman and if she wasn't careful, she might hurt herself.

If she thought about it rationally, nothing was lacking about the logic behind her opponent's ability. She could not think of any way to circumvent the woman's ability. However, Lin Sanjiu just had the inkling that the caped woman was definitely hiding an important information from her. That information was definitely the crucial weakness of the woman's ability.

No one's ability was invincible.

The atmosphere became very tense. While Lin Sanjiu was thinking, both herself and the caped woman just stared at each other silently.

"Huh?"

After a few seconds, Lin Sanjiu suddenly froze for a second.

Lin Sanjiu had just already stopped attacking for more than ten seconds. She stopped attacking because she worried about the reflected attacks. This was understandable. But, why wasn't the caped woman attacking her?

If she thought about it carefully, other than that first collision, the caped woman had not taken any initiative to attack her.

"Could it be that the cost of having the [Mirror] ability, is that one's attack will become weak?"

But even so, that didn't solve anything. Even if the woman's natural attacks were weak, Lin Sanjiu still couldn't harm that woman in any way. Besides, the woman had not even used any Special Items yet. That didn't mean that she wouldn't use them.

While Lin Sanjiu started feeling vexed about the situation and was at a loss, she suddenly had a grasp on something.

"She mentioned... mirror?"

Chapter 274: Broken Fragments

With a soft "thud," Lin Sanjiu's feet left the ground again. The marble floor cracked under the pressure of her feet. Dust and fragments of fine-grained marble stirred from the ground. With the additional momentum from leaping up, Lin Sanjiu flew up and did a half-twist before she gathered her full body strength in her left fist and hit the woman with another attack.

"So, you are really not giving up?" Faint laughter came from under the hooded cape. As an earth-shattering attack came toward her, the south wing woman stood still as before. "You don't believe what I say?"

She finished her sentence but her voice quivered very slightly on the last word as if she had been interrupted—she had indeed been interrupted by yet another punch Lin Sanjiu had delivered to her abdomen.

The punch disrupted the woman's blood, breathing, and organs. Lin Sanjiu could feel that only a thin, seemingly very weak, layer of muscles and fats was the only thing between her fist and the woman's abdominal cavity. If she tore through it, she would be able to plant her fist right into the woman's organs. However, in a split second, Lin Sanjiu felt a force hit her so hard she nearly passed out for a second. Her body flew backward once more.

"Nothing will change no matter how many times you try." The woman smiled from under the shadow of her hood.

It took some effort for Lin Sanjiu to steady herself in mid-air and land on the ground again. Lin Sanjiu stared at the woman and wiped her face before grinning with resolution.

"Ah, now I know I have become this powerful. That's good news to me." After she said this, she coughed, "I guess you're just going to stand there and let me hit you?"

"Well, if you can stand it, I don't mind," the caped woman said with a drawn-out voice, as if she was amused. "I'm really curious about what you plan to do. With my reflective ability, you might just accidentally kill yourself."

Lin Sanjiu replied her with another charged attack.

The moment Lin Sanjiu rushed at the woman, the caped woman made a slight movement involuntarily despite her [Mirror] ability. Her opponent's attack was filled with aggression, like a fierce tiger that was bound on devouring its prey. It was just too threatening. However, the caped woman took a moment to overcome her instinct to run. She stuck her chin up slightly and took another blow from Lin Sanjiu.

Even though it was only a single blow, Lin Sanjiu fully understood the feeling of feebleness when she received the reflected attack. Luckily, she was just made of higher consciousness. And, thankfully, she could recondense and recover the scattered higher consciousness. If she still had her own real body made of flesh and bones, half her torso would have exploded into a bloody pulp with blood spraying everywhere.

Even so, Lin Sanjiu was still hurt by the attack. She curled up in mid-air and couldn't move for a long time. The pain she felt reminded her of "Mankind's Bane." On a lighter note, it was funny that the most powerful attack she endured in Kisaragi Station was actually her own.

"To be honest, I am starting to feel a little bored," an unhurried voice came from under the woman's hood. "With my [Mirror]—"

Before she could finish her sentence, she already lost her chance to speak, because, at that time, Lin Sanjiu had already recovered and did not waste any time to plant the third, no, fourth punch at her.

If her previous attacks were threatening, her current attack was vicious enough to make someone just stop thinking. It was like a

tsunami wave or a huge monster that was going to swallow a city. She knew very well that her opponent was just a woman with a normal built, yet when Lin Sanjiu loomed high above her, the caped woman felt like she had been pinned to the floor by that woman's shadow. She couldn't even move.

"No matter what, I—"

She had only managed to say this when her body was violently struck by a blow like a tsunami. The library shook from the force and clouds of dust fell from the ceiling.

This time, it was the caped woman's turn to fly backward. When her body first left the ground, it was as if she still had not processed what had happened. The caped woman was still mouthing the word "would" when she finally let out an alarmed cry instead. The opponent in front of her had stopped and she could see her sharp, collected silhouette against the dim light.

When the caped woman landed on the ground, her body splattered on impact, her bones shattered into powder and her body was in a mash.

Her abdomen, which had received the main brunt of the force, all the way to her chest and down to her pelvis bone was now just an empty red mess. With her skeleton shattered, her pairs of legs had detached from the torso due to the force and were nowhere to be seen. If it wasn't for the blood and the grounded flesh, it was also impossible to tell that the woman even had a body to begin with.

The only part of the woman's body that was still intact was her head that was still attached to her neck. The woman's cape had been shredded by the razor winds from the blow, revealing a sheet-white face. No one could tell whether it was because the woman still had lives left or because she still had that last bit of consciousness, but the woman with a mediocre face was still alive.

"It is... it is impossible..." she said as her eyes widened. From the looks of it, her eyesight was already failing, as her pupils started

dilating, but she was still unable to find Lin Sanjiu's position, "My... my... mirror..."

Lin Sanjiu wiped her face and walked next to the woman.

As her body lay in broken pieces, the pale woman's gaping mouth stopped moving. She finally showed no sign of life.

"You certainly didn't forget your mirror even till the bitter end," Lin Sanjiu eyed the woman's head and felt a sudden wave of emotions. "So, even at your deathbed, you fail to understand the essence of your ability?"

The metaphor that the woman used, about attacks being reflected like light off a mirror, was clear enough but it wasn't exactly right.

"Indeed, you can reflect my attacks back to me... However, you forgot something," Lin Sanjiu bent over, picked up a scrap from that woman's clothes and tossed it at her face. "You are not a mirror. And... my attacks are not just light."

When Lin Sanjiu attacked the woman the second time, she confirmed that she could really feel the movement of the woman's organs and her trembling muscles through her fist when her attack connected. Even though the woman received the blow directly, she didn't feel anything weird because the attack was successfully reflected. Therefore, she remained calm all along.

"Even if you are a real mirror, there is a moment in time that the light hits you before it gets reflected."

In any case, whether the caped woman's ability involved herself changing into a mirror or if she still maintained her physical body of flesh and blood, there must be a certain upper limit to the amount of damage she could reflect. Lin Sanjiu attacked the woman harder and harder each time because she wanted to find that upper limit.

Once Lin Sanjiu broke through the upper limit, the caped woman

would be shattered before she could even reflect the attack.

Lin Sanjiu took a deep breath and did not throw another glance at the woman on the ground. She turned around and ran back to the siblings.

The two teenagers had already noticed that the fight had ended. They were jumping and cheering loudly for Lin Sanjiu with flushed faces. When Lin Sanjiu rushed over, she was relieved to see that the kids were alright. When she looked around the library, she suddenly realized that there was something a little off.

The library was too quiet.

She did not see any remaining duoluozhongs from the south wing. She also did not know where the West Wing team, who were fighting with the duoluozhongs, had run off to. Silvan wasn't around either. At that moment, in the empty central hall, she only spotted Siri, who was just sitting motionlessly without making a sound, and the siblings. Hearing their cheers echoing through the library was rather strange.

"Where are those people?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help asking.
"Where did they go?"

The siblings' expressions froze for a moment.

"That..." Reno seemed to be tongue-tied as he showed a complex expression. "Well, about that..."

"As expected. You won," a pleasant male voice rang out from an unknown direction, interrupting Reno's sentence. Reno and Rena seemed relieved that they did not have to explain the situation. They turned to the voice, along with Lin Sanjiu.

Lin Sanjiu was sure that Siri's work desk was just empty a few seconds ago. However, Silvan was now leaning lazily against the desk with his hands in his pocket. His golden hair, his uniform, and half his body were dark red, apparently stained by a massive amount of blood.

When he grinned, his teeth were still sparkling white as before.
"We got all five books. Let's go verify them."

Lin Sanjiu stared at him and did not move for some time.

Chapter 275: Getting Some Powerful Items! !

The roads, the houses, the flyover... lay under the dusky skies. There was only a deafening silence of emptiness.

When Lin Sanjiu stopped and turned to look behind, Kisaragi Library, despite its large size, had already faded into the scenery like a murky watercolor painting. She could only see the vague outlines of the building.

"I just can't understand that man," she softly remarked, almost sounding like she was sighing. The siblings, standing by her side, exchanged glances as if they didn't know how to reply to her.

It had been three to four hours since they parted ways with Silvan. After he disappeared into the drearily gray city, Lin Sanjiu and the siblings also continued on their journey. Following her lead, they chose the direction opposite from where Silvan was heading and started walking slowly.

In the library, though half of his body got soaked in fresh blood, Silvan grinned at her as if he was completely unaffected. That image was still clear in Lin Sanjiu mind now because, at that time, she thought that the man was about to turn on her at any second.

Based on her current experience, she had not tried to fight such a strong foe before.

Just when Lin Sanjiu tensed her body, Silvan cocked his head, showing a very laid-back attitude. With a matter-of-factly tone, he asked her, "What are you waiting for? Go and verify those books."

"You..." Lin Sanjiu muttered. She narrowed her eyes as she examined the blood-soaked half of his body. She quickly looked away from him. As the light was much dimmer behind him, she wasn't sure whether that odd-shaped thing on the floor was a leg lying in the shadows behind the man.

"Oh, are you concerned about that?" Silvan lowered his head and looked at his blood-soaked uniform. He looked up again and smiled. In a natural and friendly manner, he comforted, "Don't worry, this isn't my blood."

"Whose is it?" Lin Sanjiu swallowed before she asked. She certainly wasn't worried for him.

"Those people from the west wing," Silvan replied as he pointed behind him nonchalantly without looking back. "I made a request, but they refused, so I had to use violence to solve the problem."

"What request?"

"You've forgotten?" Silvan grinned boyishly, showing his white teeth again. His smile was more eye-catching than usual, especially in contrast to the dark-red bloodstains on his shirt. "You even figured that out yourself. I came to this world to catch duoluozhongs."

When he said this, Lin Sanjiu immediately knew that Silvan had already figured out that she was that weird skull-like thing. If someone thought through all the clues, it wasn't difficult to come to that conclusion, however, she was still a little startled. "So, the duoluozhongs from the south wing have been..."

"Just like that building spirit you lured me into, they are all in my cage." When he brought up the topic about duoluozhongs, he talked about them like lab rats, "By the way, that building spirit is quite a good fellow. I have to thank you for that."

The members from the west wing, who were keen to get the lives from the duoluozhongs, definitely wouldn't allow Silvan to catch those duoluozhongs. Lin Sanjiu looked once more at that odd-shaped thing on the floor and, this time, she could see clearly that a single human leg was attached to that thing.

"Is it worth killing people just..." Even though Lin Sanjiu had just killed someone herself, she still felt somewhat uncomfortable.

After all, the West Wing team were standing on their side, "...for that?"

However, her question was pretty much useless because she could already see Silvan's answer from his green, emerald eyes. He was visibly angry when Peach died but he slaughtered four people with indifference even though they were fighting on their side.

From that moment, Lin Sanjiu decided that she would definitely part ways with that man. She took out the five books and looked at Silvan, "You really don't need the lives?"

Silvan chuckled as if Lin Sanjiu had asked him some sort of naive question. Then, he immediately showed her his back and took off his dark blue uniform combat shirt.

A drop of blood rolled down his muscular, well-defined back, along his back dimple and passed a small black "261".

"How many people has he killed?"

While the siblings simultaneously gasped, Lin Sanjiu did not say another word. She went to the desk and slammed the books in front of Siri. As the book searching event had lasted for six days, they only won 19 lives from the event. However, adding the lives they earned from the battles, when they left the library, Lin Sanjiu's number had increased to 77. As Rena released a powerful effect from one of the book pages, her number had also reached 54. Reno earned less lives, but he at least had 42. At least, they weren't in any danger of using up their lives within this period of time.

According to the rules, after Siri had verified all five books, she would hand over the books to Lin Sanjiu and her team. When Lin Sanjiu got back the books, they had already been converted to five permanent Special Items which could be used anytime.

[The Heart-Stealing Consort Escapes With a Baby]: Regardless of the situation, the user can escape once from the target. However, the probability of being found by the target would increase in a

short period after using this item.

[A Girl's Sorrow]: This item has two effects. The first effect makes the target feel sorrow. The other effect would turn the target into a young girl. Activating the effects would cause a series of negative consequences depending on the situation.

[A Detailed Guide to Forensic Reconstruction of Dinosaur Fossils]: Surprisingly, the effect of this book does not have any connection to dinosaurs at all. However, it can create a drawing of a person from the traces they leave behind. It is fairly accurate.

[How to Render]: People can see because of light. This effect of this book creates a powerful distortion of shadow and light. Please slowly explore its uses.

[A World History of Art]: This book allows the recreation of the scenery as well as the background origin of random famous art pieces. It would enforce the situation on the target and could work like a mini pocket dimension.

With a mentality that having an additional ally would be more beneficial than another foe, Lin Sanjiu showed her courteous side and offered Silvan the opportunity to choose a book of his liking. She was slightly astonished when the latter smiled and chose [A Detailed Guide to Forensic Reconstruction of Dinosaur Fossils]. He left the more powerful books for them.

With the remaining books, each of them could get one book. As suggested by the siblings, Lin Sanjiu decided to sell off the last book at Red Nautilus to earn her "living expenses" there. Lin Sanjiu was quite shocked when she heard this because she couldn't imagine that she would actually need money in an apocalyptic world.

"Actually... Even though older brother Silvan killed all those people," Rena said suddenly as they were walking, "He doesn't seem like a bad person... Didn't he bury that person called Peach?"

Lin Sanjiu did not know why the two children had such an exceptional impression of Silvan. She did not reply. Instead, she listened silently to the siblings' discussion as they continued walking. After some time, the three of them stopped all at once, spontaneously.

This was because they had spotted a very familiar face peering from the window of a two-story building. He had a very shocked expression.

Chapter 276: Fan Service For Cat Lovers

Wafts of meat fragrance accompanied the faint white steam coming out from a small metal container atop an open fire. The fire created an interplay of light and shadow upon the faces of the people surrounding it. The fire lit their faces and their bright, sparkling eyes.

Lin Sanjiu didn't know how long it had been since she had seen hot, sizzling food. Though she craved for a bite, she could only sit beside the food and stare.

Just moments ago, she refused to accept her condition and insisted on trying a bite of that meat. The meat literally "went through her body undigested" and fell to the floor. Because of that, the siblings reproached her for quite a long while.

"I think the meat should be done?" When Rena said those words, Lin Sanjiu could hear the saliva in the girl's mouth, the girl was almost gurgling her saliva, "I think it is ready!"

Before she finished her sentence, she rapidly brought her chopsticks to the side of the metal container—

Thwack. Her chopsticks were smacked away from the metal container, this was followed by a loud, furious reprimanding, "You can only eat when I say so!"

Even though his voice sounded very sweet, it was still very domineering when he was stern, "The cheese inside hasn't fully melted, and the rice at the bottom is still hard! It obviously isn't ready!"

As Rena had rarely seen him being so strict, she immediately nodded and bowed before returning to her seat. She was very ashamed of herself and quickly apologized, "Sir, please don't be angry. Don't be angry."

At that moment, the cat doctor, always well-respected by

everyone, twitched his white whiskers and stared at all of them disdainfully with his green eyes showing a "you're-all-not-worthy-to-be-called-humans" attitude.

Lin Sanjiu and the siblings had accidentally stumbled upon the cat doctor's territory earlier that day in the afternoon.

Even though the face they saw from the window of the second floor belonged to a furry cat, it did not hinder his display of shock. After the two parties stared at each other for a few seconds, the bicolor cat spoke to the humans in a polite, reserved but extremely unwelcoming tone, "Oh, we meet again. My fr-friends."

He said the word 'friend' with much difficulty as if it troubled him greatly. Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling impressed by his self-control when the cat finally finished that sentence.

The moment the siblings saw the cat doctor, they were instantly spell-bound. This particular charm that the cat possessed seemed to affect everyone except Lin Sanjiu, even without the cat specifically targeting anyone. The two teenagers immediately showed their extreme delight and greeted the cat doctor warmly, "Dr. Hu! We didn't know we'd meet you here! You are not working at the provincial hospital today?"

Meowie Hu shifted his eyes left and then right before answering, "Yes, erm, many people came to the provincial hospital recently, so it is difficult for me to work there..."

Lin Sanjiu wanted very badly to ask the cat about the nature of his work. However, she changed her question at the very last minute, "Did the provincial hospital also turned into a mutated building?"

The cat doctor let out a somewhat troubled sigh and nodded his head.

"If you don't mind, why don't you come along with us!" The

current Reno had forgotten about cat phobia entirely, and invited Meowie with a voice full of sincerity, "Who knows? We might be able to assist you or even get rid of possible problems you may encounter..."

Meowie Hu almost seemed like he wanted to reject instinctively, but for some reasons, he turned to the interior of the building and suddenly asked bashfully, "Previously, you mentioned that you would get some corpses for me... how is it..."

"Isn't there more than enough dead bodies in that building for you to use?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself.

Reno and Rena were now basically blind even with their eyes wide open. However, Lin Sanjiu could see everything very clearly. There were many human-shaped black shadows hanging in the room that the bicolor cat was in, and it was a creepy sight to behold.

When the siblings heard the cat, they immediately felt ashamed of themselves. They had racked up quite a kill count, but neither of them remembered to bring a corpse back for the cat doctor. Thinking about it, they felt extremely apologetic. To make up for their oversight, the two children were even more determined to persuade the cat doctor to join them with the justification that they wanted to find "the perfect corpse" for the doctor.

"Only one?" the bicolor asked coyly.

"We will get you any amount you need!" The siblings guaranteed as if they were talking about radishes.

Momentarily, the little cat appeared seemingly perplexed by the situation. The children persuaded him, one after the other, with unyielding enthusiasm and hospitality. Finally, the cat shot a quick glance at Lin Sanjiu— seeing that she didn't have much of a reaction— he suddenly sighed and nodded courteously toward them, "If that is the case, please let me tidy up my humble abode before I invite you in for a discussion."

With that, the cat brought them into the building after fifteen minutes.

Lin Sanjiu didn't mind the way that it rubbed its body on each wall while it was leading them. After all, there was certainly no sign of those corpses after he cleaned up the place. However, Lin Sanjiu felt that it could be better if blood would stop seeping out from under the doors.

The three humans and a cat sat around a round table. After they exchanged glances with each other, they found that they didn't have anything to say. There was a sudden awkwardness in the atmosphere.

"Since my friends are here," the cat doctor wrapped his tail elegantly around his body, "I'll need to treat you guys to a meal. Thankfully, a family member of a patient of mine brought some cans of food for me today. If you don't mind, I could cook a meal for you. Nowadays, the living conditions here are rather lacking, forgive me for any negligence."

"But... the food here have all been corroded by black matter, isn't it?" Reno asked cautiously.

The cat immediately looked up at Reno and replied calmly, "Both of you have already been fully corroded."

The siblings were stunned and suddenly found themselves speechless.

It was evident that the cat doctor often cooked for himself because he had a full set of cooking utensils and his actions showed his cooking proficiency. In the beginning, Lin Sanjiu actually had doubts about the cat's ability to cook, but she was stupefied a few minutes after his ethanol stove was lit.

The scariest part of it was that Meowie Hu did not tolerate any opposing opinions when he was cooking.

Seeing that the food was almost ready, the cat doctor acted a little

milder. He wore two mittens on his paw and took the metal container away from the fire. "Even though the food supply in this world cannot be compared to what it was before, with a bit of effort, the food can taste pretty good. Go ahead and taste this. Does this rice with seaweed bits and cheese-filled luncheon meat taste good?"

As the siblings accepted the food from the cat, they were almost going to cry. After they arrived at Kisaragi Station, they had been eating that yellowish-green army ration without any warmth. When the smell of meat hit them, they felt a sense of salvation.

While the kids gorged themselves, the cat doctor restrained himself and stopped only after taking too fussy bites of the food.

Lin Sanjiu tried her best to avert her gaze from the food. Perhaps, in an attempt to distract herself, she asked quietly, "By the way, are you a duoluo zhong?"

The cat, who had been licking his fur, paused suddenly.

Chapter 277: A Small Problem

The hospital that the cat doctor worked at wasn't initially called Kitty Provincial Hospital. Its original name was Citizen Lake First Hospital—though that isn't important. More importantly, there was an old residential area behind the hospital where the dormitory apartments were likely built for the hospital staff. Meowie Hu once lived there.

"Embarrassingly, I once was a prominent character in this small residential area," the cat nodded his head modestly. "Everyone respected me."

Lin Sanjiu looked at the cat, puzzled. After she asked him that question, the cat doctor denied it flatly and decided that he needed to explain his story from the beginning. Once he started, Lin Sanjiu already found it a little hard to understand.

Even though she was bewildered, she finally understood his story after a while.

Most of the people living in that residential area were the hospital's retired staff. To "pay their respect" to him, quite a few elderly men and ladies would often place cat food, or small cooked fishes under a long bench in the residential area to feed Meowie Hu.

Perhaps, the elderly people were too lonely, or maybe Meowie Hu was too cute, so he was "well-respected" in that area. With the exception of the times that he had been caught to be vaccinated, he had an easy life... until one dark, stormy night.

Even before that night, Meowie Hu already had some inkling that something was wrong. The few elderly people, who often prepared food for the cat, began to wander around the residential area frequently, involuntarily and expressionlessly. The cat didn't know what they were doing. The food bowl under the long bench had already been empty for two to three days and that had never

happened before.

Consequently, when Meowie Hu spotted a familiar figure in the darkness while he was hiding in a bush, he quickly rushed toward the person, mewing in relief. In the residential area, this elderly lady "respected" him the most and visited him most frequently. Like every other night, the elderly lady brought a mix of cat food and fish as well as a bowl of clean water for the cat. The woman sat on the long bench before bending over and placing the food on the floor.

Just as Meowie Hu was about to approach the food, he immediately froze because there was a stench of sour, rotting food coming from his food bowl. It might not be that obvious to humans but it was torture for him when he caught a whiff of that pungent stench.

The bicolor cat sat down. He looked up and mewed.

"Why aren't you eating?" the elderly lady lowered her head. Compared to before, her voice sounded a little strange, as if she wasn't breathing properly, "Don't you like sardines?"

"But, it is really smelly." Meowie Hu wanted to mew again to communicate that he didn't dare to eat the food. Just as he was mewing, he was suddenly interrupted by a shadow of something which fell to the ground. Thud, thud, thud. The little cat was startled and quickly leaped to one side. It was only then that he saw what that thing, which had fallen and rolled a few meters away from him, was. It was the elderly lady's head.

"I was terrified then," the cat doctor sighed at this point and looked at his audience who were listening intently. He took a few sips of water from the tea cup that Rena had prepared for him before continuing, "The fallen head could still talk..."

Meowie Hu was still a normal cat then so he only felt that there was something very, very wrong. He stared blankly at the woman's moving lips, "Eat. Why aren't you eating? Aren't you hungry?"

"Should, should I help her?"

Faced with the options to "push the woman's head back to her" or "turn and run", Meowie Hu's animal instincts finally kicked in. The fur on his back stand on end and he started running for his life, not knowing what had happened to the normal old lady he once knew. The human head seemed unwilling to let him escape, horrifyingly, it started rolling on the ground, "Why aren't you eating? Why aren't you eating?"

The woman's head chased after the cat relentlessly as she said those words over and over again.

After darting about like a headless fly, Meowie Hu finally lost sight of the human head after he jumped over the wall surrounding the hospital. He seemed to have shaken her off.

He looked behind him with a lingering fear. While he hesitated whether to return the next day to observe the situation, he froze involuntarily when he turned his head back.

"Apparently, the hospital was the fastest place to be fully corroded by black matter. It had completely turned into a haunted location of an urban legend."

After the cat doctor drank some water, he yawned as Reno stroked his fur gently and continued, "But I was considerably lucky because the lead role of that urban legend was a cat—"

And animals cannot become duoluo zhongs.

Meowie Hu did not know what particular changes happened to his body when he entered the hospital after a series of coincidental events. Even the siblings who were from the Twelve World Centrum didn't have a clue.

The apocalyptic worlds themselves were strange and erratic, let alone an unpredictable B-level world like Kisaragi Station. Thus, it wasn't surprising that there existed changes and evolutions in the various worlds that even residents from the Twelve World

Centrum are unaware of.

"If you are keen to get an explanation, the hospital needed to hire a doctor and I was incidentally very suitable for the position." The cat doctor lifted its chin slightly. His rather haughty attitude distracted them from asking him about his lack of medical background. "In short, after I finished my internship, I became an official doctor there.

From his story, it was as if Kitty Provincial Hospital had a life of its own.

After Meowie Hu gained sentience and the ability to charm humans, he could no longer return to his normal cat life.

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help thinking of B.Rabbit. Even though they were both animals, their lives turned out quite different. Lin Sanjiu thought about the situation and started examining the cat's back. The fact that there wasn't any number on the cat's smooth fur seemed to prove that what Meowie Hu said was true.

After hearing the cat doctor's story, the siblings finished their meal and waited upon the bicolor, little cat until it was happy and satisfied without much trouble. After losing successively at rock-paper-scissor against his sister and the cat doctor, Reno took the plates and metal container and washed them obediently.

Lin Sanjiu could not comprehend how he could lose to an opponent who could only throw out "paper".

When the night gradually grew dark, the siblings felt that it was almost time for them to go out to get some corpses for the cat doctor. At that time, Mrs. Manas's voice suddenly rang out in Lin Sanjiu's mind without any warning.

Ever since Lin Sanjiu's higher consciousness body had fully been developed, Mrs. Manas had not shown herself for a couple of days. Lin Sanjiu quickly gathered her focus. She did not know why Mrs. Manas would suddenly appear this time.

"About that," Mrs. Manas mumbled her words a little, speaking rather hesitantly, "actually, I want to tell you something..."

"What?" Lin Sanjiu asked. The cat doctor immediately perked his ears and looked around as if he was trying to figure out where that sudden voice came from...

"Well, regarding the matter of you regaining your physical body, there is a small little problem..."

Chapter 278: Cells

If Mrs. Manas were to appear as a real person in front of her right now, Lin Sanjiu wasn't sure if she could hold herself back from punching that woman.

The was a heavy atmosphere in the room.

The siblings who had initially decided to "take a stroll" outside noticed something amiss when they saw Lin Sanjiu's serious expression. They stood to one side of the room feeling at a loss. Meanwhile, the cat doctor, who had heard the earlier conversation between Lin Sanjiu and Mrs. Manas, sat on a table looking up at her with his head tilted.

"So, what the matter now?" Lin Sanjiu held back her anger as she questioned Mrs. Manas in her head, "What is this so-called little problem... Didn't you consider that before?"

Mrs. Manas spoke very softly because she felt guilty, "Erm... Actually... well..."

Lin Sanjiu let out a heavy sigh and pulled out the card holding her dead body. Accompanying her mood which had reached rock bottom, Lin Sanjiu's dead body fell to the ground with a thud as it was converted back to its original form.

A woman with a pallid face lay on the ground with her eyes shut. Her gray skin and her unnatural, stiff limbs already showed signs of rigor mortis. Though there weren't any wounds on her body, she didn't look like she was 'just sleeping', anybody could see that she was most positively dead. Though their faces looked the same, it was hard to imagine that the dead body and the person standing beside it were one and the same person.

Even though this was not the first time Reno had seen that body, and Rena had heard about the situation, they couldn't help staring at the corpse, turning slightly pale. Reno let out a long sigh

suddenly and averted his gaze. It was as if he couldn't really bear witnessing a situation where Lin Sanjiu was dead.

"I think it's time for me to be honest," Lin Sanjiu sat down beside her own body and almost lamenting.

Though she had gone through multiple near-death situations with the two kids, Lin Sanjiu had not revealed the details regarding her current predicament. Under such circumstances, it seemed like she had no choice but to explain her situation to them.

"When I meet both of you on the train, I had just died... I basically retained this—" she gestured to her own body as she couldn't find an appropriate word, "—because of one of my abilities..."

Before she could finish her sentence, Lin Sanjiu noticed that her physical body had moved a little, as if someone had pulled it a little distance away from her. In that instance, she didn't know whether she should laugh or be angry, her previous emotions quickly disappeared as she held the arm of her physical body and shouted in the direction of her physical feet, "You better stop!"

A pair of dark green eyes peered from behind the Timberland boots on the dead body. It blinked slowly at Lin Sanjiu.

"This isn't for you!" Lin Sanjiu was so amused by the situation that she couldn't get mad, "Didn't you hear what I say, this is my body! I can't let you do your weird experiments with this!"

However, the cat doctor didn't show an ounce of repentance. He put down his paws and started licking his fur. He walked away from the boots and acted as if nothing had happened.

After catching her breath again, Lin Sanjiu started to explain her situation from the start. Even though it was somewhat difficult to comprehend the concept behind her higher consciousness body, Reno and Rena got a general idea very quickly and understood the seriousness of the matter.

"So, what is that problem that Mrs. Manas has identified?"

Addressing this subject, Lin Sanjiu felt a heaviness in her heart once more.

It was true that her higher consciousness had kept Lin Sanjiu alive in some sense. However, it wasn't as if she didn't have her doubts even as she recovered and strengthened her higher consciousness.

Her doubts stemmed from her uneasiness that her current higher consciousness body seemed a little too tough. It was as if she needed to stuff a steel body into a body made of flesh. Lin Sanjiu simply couldn't imagine how this could be done. However, trusting Mrs. Manas, she suppressed her worries and doubts.

Unfortunately, she was thrown into despair when she heard what Mrs. Manas said today:

"From a biological perspective, your original physical body is fully dead. It doesn't even have a single vital sign. Since you retained your higher consciousness, I assumed that it was still connected to your physical body. However, considering the current situation, your higher consciousness had developed independently from your original body. Currently, your physical body doesn't show any sign of life. Naturally, you can't be resurrected."

When Lin Sanjiu revealed this information to the siblings, they turned paler than her dead body.

"What... what are you going to do now?" Rena asked with a quivering voice.

Lin Sanjiu stared at her own corpse and didn't say anything for a very long time.

From the beginning, she knew that Mrs. Manas's plan wasn't exactly foolproof. She repeated this many times to herself internally trying to keep herself calm. Living on, even without a

physical body, was something she could accept. However, would she still be transported to another world even without a physical body? What would she do if something went wrong during that process? How long could she maintain her higher consciousness body? Could she even be considered human at this point?

As more and more questions and thoughts filled her mind, she began to feel more and more confused. Suddenly, Mrs. Manas suddenly asked her a question in a very soft voice, "Erm, do you remember? In the previous world, your [School of Higher Consciousness] shrunk suddenly and I even threw you out..."

This immediately caught Lin Sanjiu's attention.

"And, do you remember me telling you that I had to delay the opening of the elementary division of your [School of Higher Consciousness] because I had to deal with a problematic student..."

Lin Sanjiu could remember this clearly. At that time, she thought that Mrs. Manas only said that to provide some sort of "realistic" background. Recalling that memory, she immediately asked, "This isn't the only two things! Before I died, you were constantly using my higher consciousness, right? You always refuse to tell me these things you do behind my back..."

"That's right," Mrs. Manas sighed. "I have been hiding these things from you because I know that you'll be uncontrollably affected if you know the truth. This issue involves another person's schemes and your own psychological state, so it is very complicated. However, considering the current situation, this has ironically become our lifesaver. Maybe, this might be the key to reviving you..."

Lin Sanjiu could no longer hold back her curiosity; she couldn't stop herself blurting out, "So, what are exactly are you talking about?"

Lin Sanjiu had no idea what could remedy her current situation.

"To be precise... we can explain death at a cellular level," Mrs. Manas said slowly. "When all your cells die, you die. However, what would it mean if some of your cells are still alive?"

Chapter 279: The Slightly Rugged Road to Revival

The siblings didn't comprehend much. From their perspective, it was probably bizarre for them to see Lin Sanjiu's changing expressions as she looked more and more serious.

Mrs. Manas' voice sounded somewhat helpless as it rang through the depths of Lin Sanjiu's mind.

"It all goes back to the Black Tower at the Garden of Eden. When you were fighting with the 'sages', St. Peter and you were injured. St. Peter was bleeding... Do you remember?"

"Yes... Subsequently, during the battle, St. Peter's blood was transferred to your wound. The current reality proves that it wasn't accidental."

"Somehow, those cells carrying that strange creature's genes exhibit very strong self-directing behaviors. They quickly spread through your skin's dermal level and entered your body through your microcirculation system... From then, they had 'settled' in your body.

"These cells hold an unusually large amount of genes. According to the gene sequences, the cells not only hold the full genome of the 'Neuhumes' designed by Nüwa, but they also can invade, infect and mutate the owner's cells like viruses. When I noticed that something was wrong, the cells had already perforated through and altered a small part of your body... Let me put it this way, you can view them as a different sort of cancer cell.

"After these cells entered your body system, the unique sequences belonging to the Neuhume genome are expressed by the cells and they started to invade your body continually. I don't know what they were designed to do, but I am sure of one thing. If those cells had not been genetically modified, the Neuhumes would definitely

not be as peace-loving as they appear. From the aggressive behavior of their cells, it is hard to believe that they are pacifists by nature."

After Mrs. Manas said that in one single breath, Lin Sanjiu took quite some time to process the new information she had received. After she thought about it for a while, she muttered weakly, "You said that they are like cancer cells... But, why can't I sense any changes in my body even after such a long time?"

Mrs. Manas sighed seemingly. "They metastasize like cancer cells, but... the process and means are a little different." Once she said this, she paused, almost as if she remembered something, and quickly changed the topic, "If you see Nüwa again, don't interact with her! Just avoid her at all cost! Because I suspect... she is a higher consciousness user."

"You mean—"

"That's right. If these cells that invaded your body are merely attacking you on a biological level, I may not be able to sense them. The fact that I can sense them implies that they carry someone's higher consciousness—Nüwa's. Furthermore, your [School of Higher Consciousness] had already been attacked multiple times by them."

Lin Sanjiu stood up from her chair abruptly. She was so shocked that she didn't know what to say for a long time.

"You're telling me... You have been using my higher consciousness to fight against those cells?" Lin Sanjiu paused for a moment as if she couldn't bring herself to believe what she was hearing, "Then, what are these cells trying to do? If they succeed, what would happen to me?"

"For now, it's still hard to say," Mrs. Manas seemed uncertain. "But, Nüwa probably didn't expect you to just die like that. As your higher consciousness had been fully separated from your body, not only are you safe from their attacks but they are currently in

imminent danger—"

"These cells were designed to be 'warriors' so they are extremely resilient. I had discovered very early when I fought against them a couple of times. We can only hope that these cells are not dead yet but are in a sort of hibernation state. If we can somehow activate them again, and use this chance to trick them to attack your dead cells, we might get them to merge with your body cells. With that, it would renew your cells. If they can revive your cells, you might have a chance to revive your physical body."

Lin Sanjiu had been blissfully unaware of these battles within her body all this time. Hearing this now, she found herself in a highly strung state. "What would happen to me after this... merger?"

"I don't know," Mrs. Manas' immediate reply choked Lin Sanjiu. "But, this is your only choice now."

After Mrs. Manas said this, a voice filled with a clearly restrained excitement rang out, "Maybe, I can help!"

Lin Sanjiu looked up and noticed that the eyes of the black-white cat in front of her had never been so brighter.

Surprisingly, the cat doctor, with an unclassifiable existence, could hear Mrs. Manas just like the other spirit duoluo zhongs. When Mrs. Manas was explaining the situation to Lin Sanjiu, the cat listened to every single word without moving an inch. He looked down at the dead body, then he turned to Lin Sanjiu with an eye-blindingly bright expression, "If you want to try activating those cells, I think I can help you—don't forget, I'm a doctor."

Lin Sanjiu had her reservations about this doctor. However, what Meowie Hu said next stunned her.

"Back in the provincial hospital, we launched a research study," the cat doctor seemed to have noticed Lin Sanjiu's apprehension so he stuck his chin up arrogantly. "At that time, I captured about five people who were about to die so that I could observe the changes to

their body the moment they died and also the slow process of how they turned into a duoluozhong... I won't go into details regarding the medical terms involved. You will all just be confused. To keep things brief, a technique can be used for triggering the first step of the duoluozhong conversion process. I think it is something you can use."

Lin Sanjiu didn't need any more explanation to figure out how abnormal the experiment sounded. She eyed blankly for a few seconds before she understood that the cat doctor wasn't trying to turn her into a duoluozhong, but was planning to use a similar technique to activate those Neuhume cells.

"How are you going to do that?" she asked cautiously.

"We can't do it here," the cat doctor shook his head. "I need some equipment which can only be found in the provincial hospital. If you want to test that technique, you will have to come with me to the provincial hospital."

Lin Sanjiu was slightly startled, "But, you just said—"

"Yes," the bicolor cat blinked its large eyes, "The provincial hospital had already turned into one of the mutated buildings affected by the pocket dimension here. When I left, batches and batches of posthumans had entered the hospital trying to get more lives. It was almost never-ending."

Chapter 280: The Sink and The Infected

Despite being a world filled with the supernatural, paradoxically, Kisaragi Station was never fully dark during the night.

As the electrical and water supply systems were still functioning normally in most areas, a person standing at a road junction near the Kitty Provincial Hospital would find the road heading toward the hospital interspersed with segments of light and darkness. Some of the street lights weren't working, so those segments of the road were dark. Under the night sky, with the unique play of light and darkness, Lin Sanjiu's group headed toward the main entrance of the provincial hospital.

"Three of you can just hide to one side first," the cat doctor instructed. The light from the hospital lit his glossy fur. "I will try to scout out the situation and see if I can bring you guys in..."

Since the provincial hospital had already become a mutated building, Lin Sanjiu and the siblings would be treated as "contestants" if they stepped into the building on their own accord. It would be a replay of the situation at the library once again. Even though none of them had 108 lives, Lin Sanjiu was too worried about her physical body so she wasn't in the mood to fight.

Through the large glass doors, they could see a nurse standing in the main lobby of the hospital on the first floor. The delicate, young lady was wearing a light pink nurse uniform and was glancing around as if she was waiting for someone. Occasionally, however, she would show her highly decomposed face as she looked toward the center of the hospital, yelling something out loudly.

In comparison, Siri was definitely way cuter.

While the others watched him, the bicolor cat moved swiftly to the hospital door in a blink of an eye. The nurse stopped abruptly, without finishing her sentence, and looked at the cat for a few

seconds with her black, rotten face.

"Are you... Dr. Hu?" the nurse said slowly, appearing very hesitant. As she spoke, rotting gas from her body leaked from her chin. Lin Sanjiu noticed the bicolor cat taking a few steps backward, unconsciously.

"It is great that you're back, Dr. Hu. You can take charge of things now," the nurse's voice sounded weird as putrid gas oozed from her body, "I can give you a quick report. There are now 25 visiting family members and 12 patients. We haven't found Patient Zero."

The cat doctor waved his paws and interrupted her with a serious tone, "You are doing a good job here, you don't have to hand over your duties to me. I just brought a few interns with me for an inspection... You can just continue with your work."

The nurse stared at the cat silently, almost as if she couldn't comprehend what he meant or as if she wasn't confident about handling the current situation. The cat doctor did not waste any time. He turned to Lin Sanjiu and the siblings and called them over. Meanwhile, he distracted the nurse by continuing the conversation with her, "Go on, why don't you tell me what the problem with the current hospital protocol is. Why do you have to find Patient Zero..."

As he spoke, he gestured hastily for Lin Sanjiu and the siblings to head up the stairs. As he couldn't whisper with his cat mouth, the cat just spoke very softly, "A218, second floor! Wait for me there!"

Lin Sanjiu and the siblings did not dare even to waste a single second. They raced up the stairs, and when they reached the second floor, they could still hear the cat doctor explaining vaguely about them, "They are not, not... experiments. Yes... well, they're still interns..."

With the cat doctor stalling the nurse, Lin Sanjiu and the siblings managed to infiltrate the hospital without joining the "competition".

The second floor was bright. All the lights were working perfectly. It was clean but messy because there were many medical-related items on the floor in the corridor like thermometers and some doctor's white coats. The offices of each of the departments were also in a state of disarray as if the staff had escaped in a hurry and were planning to come back at some time.

The hospital was vast so even the second floor was segregated into A, B, C, and D zones. Right now, Lin Sanjiu and the siblings could hear some very soft muffled noise coming from some unknown direction—most likely those noises were voices of the posthumans who were trying to gain lives in the hospital.

A218 had a double door entrance and was large. The doors weren't locked. Being cautious, Lin Sanjiu scanned the room with her higher consciousness and slipped into the room only after confirming that no one else was in it. Reno and Rena followed her into the room soundlessly and then closed the door slowly.

The cat doctor certainly wasn't lying when he said that he needed the equipment in the hospital to conduct the experiment. The room they were in was about 50 m^2 , and half of the room was filled with all sorts unidentifiable ice-cold machines. There were a few whiteboards, office tables and a sink in the other half of the room.

"Huh?" Rena let out a puzzled quip. "Why is there such a large glass sink here?"

The large glass sink was almost the size of a pond. It was half-filled with a green liquid. It was so filthy it seemed as if the liquid had congealed. There wasn't a single ripple on the surface of the liquid. The thick, yellow dirt stains on the glass seemed quite out of place in contrast to the modern-looking silver machines.

Rena and Reno, with their youthful rashness, couldn't help approaching the sink because of their curiosity. Just as they smelt a faint stench of formaldehyde, there was a splash. A large white, water-bloated face knocked the sides of the glass sink suddenly.

The teenagers were so shocked that they gasped and stepped backward. They noticed that the creature was like a large fish. That thing turned away from them and disappeared into the green, dirty water once more.

"Oh, I didn't think it was still alive after such a long time," the bicolor cat remarked sounding slightly amused as he entered the room. "This duoluo zhong was one of our research subjects. However, we injected him with a somewhat failed product, so it cost me quite a few fish..."

"Are you a doctor or a mad scientist?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help questioning inwardly.

"Okay, there is no time to lose. There are many posthumans out there," the cat jumped up onto a device which was like a surgery table with a tunnel-like covering. "Put your body here. With some bio-sensors, we can see if those invasive cells are still alive..." he urged.

Hearing this, Lin Sanjiu placed her body on the "surgery table", and the cat doctor immediately worked on the body with a frenzied excitement. Very quickly, Lin Sanjiu watched as the cat doctor pasted many small, round metallic stickers all over her physical body. He stuck a few steel needles, with wires running, on some specific spots. It did look like he was about to experiment.

"Are you ready?" the cat doctor looked at a display screen sounding a little nervous himself, "I—"

Before he could finish his sentence, they heard the hair-raising voice from the nurse on the lower floor suddenly. It was disturbingly clear, "Patient Zero has appeared. Everyone, please take note. Patient Zero is now near A zone, room 20—"

Chapter 281: Patient Zero Is...

"What's going on? What does she mean by Patient Zero?" Reno grumbled. The nurse on the first floor shouted with an ear-splitting volume and her voice was still reverberating through the hospital. Reno felt as if his ears were also echoing from the noise. He exchanged glances with his sister and decided to go out to take a look at the situation.

However, they heard a low growl from the cat doctor, "Don't move around needlessly!"

"Doctor, do you know what is going on, sir?" Rena immediately turned behind, asking politely.

The bicolor cat sighed. His white whiskers twitched rapidly as he explained, "The event in this hospital involves a Patient Zero with a pathogen. An unlimited number of posthumans can participate in the event and they are called visiting family members. When a posthuman attacks Patient Zero with a fatal attack, that posthuman can gain 1-3 lives. If a person gets touched by Patient Zero, that person will become a 'patient'. Any patient within the hospital will lose two lives each day. That is twice the normal daily rate—"

As he spoke, his paws rose and landed on Lin Sanjiu's physical body so quickly that it was impossible for any of them to see what he was doing. After the cat doctor carried out that series of actions, the large tunnel-like machine started humming.

"We need to be quick. I am not sure when Nurse Amy would discover you," before he could even catch his breath, he continued, "If she discovers that you guys can also participate, it would be troublesome. Or, maybe it isn't that troublesome, you guys can just participate..."

"How can we participate under such circumstances?!" Even though the siblings were still under the cat doctor's mysterious

charm, they shouted exasperatedly, "Dr. Hu, please continue with what you want to say?"

"Oh," when the cat's white, furry paw landed on a button, Lin Sanjiu felt her heart thumping once, "Patient Zero isn't always near. Most of the time, it would pretend to be one of the patients. When it reveals itself, the nurse manager would announce its position. The posthumans would then rush over to kill this Patient Zero..."

Even though the rules aren't complicated, Lin Sanjiu and the siblings couldn't help turning pale as they heard what the cat doctor said. There were too many traps within the few rules that the cat described. As bystanders, they wanted to avoid the whole 'event' as much as possible. Rena was the first one to react after the explanation, "Let me go lock the door and block the entrance! If Patient Zero can't enter, we don't have to care about the chaos outside!"

Lin Sanjiu heard Reno agreeing with his sister. The two sisters immediately started moving the furniture in the room. Even though she heard every word the cat doctor said, she didn't even look up once—

Lin Sanjiu eyed her own physical body without averting her gaze, she had never felt so nervous before.

As the cat increased the voltage with his paw, the dead body started jerking on the surgery table. The dead body's lifeless greenish-gray skin started quivering with each jolt. Each time she spotted something just a little unusual, Lin Sanjiu would assume that it was a sign that she was reviving. But, whenever she calmed herself down and looked again, she could not avoid a bout of disappointment. After the cat doctor tried this method for about three minutes, he shook his head. He opened the back-end of some of the steel needles he had inserted into the dead body's arteries and allowed some fluid to flow into the arteries.

"What is that?"

Amidst the noise created by the siblings as they moved the office tables and chairs, Lin Sanjiu's voice was so soft that it was almost inaudible.

"If we want the invasive cells to think that you are still alive, we need to create a false environment," the cat doctor answered briefly without looking up. He flashed two of his sharp canine teeth, "Okay, stop bothering me now!"

Lin Sanjiu had no choice but to return to her seat nervously. She stared unblinkingly at her own body which was just refusing to open its eyes.

The siblings, who were at the other end of the room, had finished blocking the door. They checked the room once more. After confirming that they didn't miss any gaps and that no one was hiding in the room, they let out a sigh of relief and headed toward the surgery table.

However, the moment they turned around, the siblings froze.

"Erm... Did Dr. Hu mention how Patient Zero would look like?" Reno asked quietly. He was so startled that he sounded somewhat dim-witted.

"No, No..." Rena didn't sound any better. She stammered for some time before she called out, "Jiu..."

"Huh? What's the matter?"

Lin Sanjiu could tell from the teenage girl's voice that something was wrong. She immediately raised her guard and turned behind to question the girl.

"You, you..."

In an instant, the siblings seemed to lose their ability to speak fluently and gawked at her. Even after repeating "you" for a long time, they couldn't form a proper sentence.

Following their gaze, Lin Sanjiu looked down, puzzled. The very next second, she leaped out of her chair uncontrollably. Her reaction was so huge that it startled the cat doctor too.

"Be careful," the latter grumbled but immediately froze.

Unbeknownst to them, Lin Sanjiu's appearance had already changed completely.

Her skin was covered with red, festering scars which were uncomfortable to look at. Her long hair had almost all fallen out. There were only a few gray strands of hair on her head. Her lips, nails and eyes were an unhealthy yellow. She was definitely worthy of the term 'Patient Zero' with her current appearance.

"It can't be!" Mrs. Manas let cried out, "You are just a higher consciousness entity, you wouldn't just change without any reason. Besides, I already checked. You are alright. Your body is perfectly fine!"

"If I am fine, why am I like this—"

Before Lin Sanjiu could finish her sentence, she saw a black-white shadow leaping up. This was accompanied by a furious shout, "That bloody woman lied to me!" Everyone immediately looked at the cat doctor. "That thing about Patient Zero having 1000 lives must be bullsh*t!"

Lin Sanjiu had never seen Meowie Hu with such a livid expression. He narrowed his large round eyes dangerously, "So, that was why she said that having 30 posthumans was sufficient. She said it was unnecessary for my interns to join. The fact is that anyone outside of those 30 posthumans would be treated as Patient Zero!"

"Huh, so each time they attack Patient Zero, they are actually attacking a posthuman? The lives that they get are naturally from that posthuman..." Rena's lip turned pale. Then, she asked, "What about the rule about a posthuman changing into a patient if he or

she is touched by Patient Zero..."

"Those people that are touched are just participants. Since they already agreed to participate, the nurse with that rotting face has the power to deduct their lives..." The more he thought about it, the angrier the cat doctor became. "Just hold them back for a while, once I am done with this, I will bring you guys out!"

Once the cat said that, a voice came from the corridor outside the room: "The target is there!"

Chapter 282: Way Back Home 1

When Lin Sanjiu ran past the nurse on the first floor, she caught a glimpse of a faint revolting smile on the woman's rotting face. No matter how indignant she felt, Lin Sanjiu could do nothing to that woman. Setting aside the doubts whether the thing could even be attacked, she could only run right now because she was still being chased by a group of people and the incessant noises from their assortment of weapons, abilities and Special Items.

Even though Lin Sanjiu could fight very well now, she couldn't fight off the unified attacks from the thirty people—especially the twelve posthumans who had been converted to "patients". Under the pressure of a double rate of life reduction, they had all gone mad with anxiety. They rushed at Lin Sanjiu with their tidal wave of crazed non-stop attacks, giving Lin Sanjiu no time to even catch a breath.

The moment Lin Sanjiu discovered that her appearance had changed into "Patient Zero", she was immediately aware that she couldn't continue staying in the room.

The process to reactivate the hibernating Neuhume cells in her body, so that they would attack her dead cells, still required a long time before completion. Within this time, with her "Patient Zero" role, she knew that she couldn't risk letting this batch of posthumans come close to the cat doctor or her physical body.

Due to this unforeseen circumstance, the siblings' initial well-thought plan instantly became a hindrance. As the voices from the corridor approached the room, they all rushed to the entrance and moved away the tables and chairs, finally, clearing the path to the door. Once Lin Sanjiu shot out of the room, she was hit by a barrage of attacks from all directions, even before she could see the attackers outside clearly.

Each attack from every attacker seemed to be their best ability or tactic. Even though the attacks were more than enough to shave off a few lives from their counterparts, they were not powerful enough to do much to Lin Sanjiu's current diamond-like body. Luckily, the attacks were all damage-based. No one used any illusions or status-afflicting attacks. After Lin Sanjiu took on a few direct blows with her body, she turned around and ran.

There were 27 posthumans still alive in the hospital. When the nurse announced the location of Patient Zero, they all swarmed to the second floor, Zone A, like flies to honey. Lin Sanjiu was surrounded so she had no choice but to use [The Heart-Stealing Consort Escapes With a Baby] once. It was only then that she managed to escape.

Something suddenly whizzed sharply past the top of Lin Sanjiu's head. She ducked it in time without slowing down. From the pursuers' perspective, they saw the item grazing her head and cutting off a clump of her grey hair.

"You guys never give up!" Lin Sanjiu cursed inwardly before making a sharp turn into a corridor. She pushed open the door of a ward and rushed inside. The moment she entered the ward, she activated her [A World History of Art].

Thankfully, she had not distributed the books to the siblings yet, so they came in handy, just in time.

[A World History of Art] began flipping noisily. Light reflected off the glossy pages of the book filled with beautiful printed pictures. When Lin Sanjiu's pursuers reached the entrance of the ward, they were greeted by the smell of watercolor paint, ink, wood shavings and bread.

The famous "Portrait présumé de Gabrielle d'Estrées et de sa soeur la duchesse de Villars" suddenly unfolded in midair in front of Lin Sanjiu with an observable speed.

The person running at the forefront of the group was a fat man

whose face was covered with spots. He ran straight into the mist of colors in mid-air, as if he couldn't see that strange phenomenon. The colors became more saturated as the figures in the art pieces slowly appeared. The other pursuers running closely behind also fell into the trap, entering the "painting" like fishes in a net.

Because of this, Lin Sanjiu could stop momentarily. She threw a quick glance at the four pursuers behind her. They seemed to have suddenly entered a trance as they were wrapped in a mist of colors. They did not move even after some time.

[A World History of Art] had the ability to create a sort of mini pocket dimension. Consequently, Lin Sanjiu wasn't sure what the trapped people could see in the "painting" as their expression lit up and darkened every so often.

Even though the effect of the book was quite astonishing, it had a few obvious flaws. It could only produce one painting each time so it could only trap four to five people. Once these people entered the "painting", they couldn't be harmed by anything from the outside world for the time being. Considering those conditions, Lin Sanjiu could only hope that there are all sorts of deadly traps in the book and that the book could take care of those pursuers.

Spotting more people heading her way, Lin Sanjiu broke out of the window without much thinking. After laying down all sorts of traps for the posthumans chasing her, there were finally only a dozen or so people chasing her. The other posthumans weren't stupid. When a Patient Zero appeared, it would also be a good time to attack other posthumans who would usually be hiding. If Patient Zero was easy to deal with, everyone would go for him or her. Unfortunately, if Patient Zero was difficult to handle, like Lin Sanjiu, the participants of the events would most likely be backstabbed by other posthumans before they could even attack.

With lesser pursuers, Lin Sanjiu wasn't as worried anymore.

She flew back to the main lobby on the first floor like a

whirlwind. She could still see the nurse-like creature in a pink uniform standing beside the reception table in the middle of the lobby. Lin Sanjiu smiled coldly. She leaped up and rushed toward the nurse's back.

While the remaining pursuers gasped in horror, Lin Sanjiu landed an earth-shattering punch directly on the nurse's backbone. Everyone heard a screech. Then, the nurse-like creature body broke into two before flying out. The nurse did not die but she started screaming loudly, "Sister Nurse had been attacked! Attack Patient Zero! Protect Sister Nurse! You will get an additional reward!"

The nurse's uniform barely held the two segments of the nurse's body together. With the movements she made as she screamed, her waist and legs slipped out from her dress. Along with them, the woman's intestines and organs fell to the floor with a splat.

The posthumans who heard the offer of "additional rewards" suddenly acted as if they were given steroids.

"Though her punch is admittedly scary, as long as I don't get hit, it will be fine," with such thoughts in mind, the pursuers started activating all sorts of ability and Special Items thinking that the Patient Zero this round was a close-combat fighter.

In an instant, Lin Sanjiu was surrounded by flashes of lights and shadows surrounding her. Despite being visibly strong, she was finding the current situation challenging. As she dodged and evaded the attacks, she heard Rena's excited voice over the communicator, "Jiu! Come back! I think your body is alive!"

Lin Sanjiu was delighted. However, she instantly cursed the thorny situation she was in. Considering this situation, how could she return?

Chapter 283: Way Back Home 2

"Get the cat doctor to talk to me!"

As this sentence shot out of Lin Sanjiu's mouth, she smashed a wooden stick-like Special Item into pieces with her extraordinarily powerful punch. While the owner of that [Poor Skill Distribution Magic Wand] was shocked by that blow, Lin Sanjiu delivered a sidekick to her opponent's abdomen, taking a few lives away from that man. The skinny man let out a shriek as he was flung far away.

"Dr. Hu," Lin Sanjiu ducked and dodged a streak of dust heading her way. Then, she asked calmly, "What is the condition of my physical body right now?"

The cat's usually sweet, mew-like tone, was currently serious yet excited, "Things are looking very promising! As expected, the invasive cells in your body are still alive! I managed to reactivate them just a moment ago. Just as that person in your head described, they started invading your body once they got reactivated..."

Before Lin Sanjiu could reply with a "really?", she heard the nurse—with only half a body—urging the posthumans nearby to attack Lin Sanjiu's legs. Lin Sanjiu rushed over almost instinctively and delivered a spinning kick. She kicked the blood-covered half body of the nurse directly into a wall. Splat. A splatter of black blood spread across the wall as the fleshy remnants slowly slid down the wall.

"Right now, their attacks aren't that stable. They are attacking intermittently. I am currently creating a pseudo-electrophysiology environment in your body. Hopefully, this will stimulate and increase their activity level... Huh? What is this reaction? This isn't right—"

The cat doctor suddenly raised his voice, as if his attention was

drawn by a sudden, unexpected situation. Thereafter, the communicator was silent.

"What's wrong?" Lin Sanjiu was so anxious that she asked that question repetitively. However, she received no answer from the other side. Her heart was in her throat, she wished so hard that she could go back and check out the situation for herself. Yet, she was still hindered by these people...

With her bad mood, she showed even less restraint with her attacks. Initially, Lin Sanjiu acted with the consideration that "the others are just following the rules". However, with the waves after waves of attack, she already lost her temper. Lin Sanjiu leaped up into the air and her body gradually faded into oblivion.

This wasn't Lin Sanjiu's new ability. What the other posthumans were seeing was just the afterimages that Lin Sanjiu created when she moved at her maximum speed. While her audience gawked, the first afterimage disappeared like a burst bubble. At the same time, screams rang out within the group of pursuers.

There was a sudden spurt of blood in the air, like a fountain. Just a moment ago, Lin Sanjiu's second afterimage paused for a moment before rushing down to the ground. Lin Sanjiu had already returned to her original position before her second afterimage could even disappear.

This time, she was holding a person's leg in her hand.

When the others saw Patient Zero throwing the leg in her hand to the ground and slowly mashing that leg into a fleshy pulp, they all turned pale.

"How bothersome," the female Patient Zero said with a lowered voice as she stood in the main lobby.

"If you think you can challenge my speed, you can go ahead and stay right here." Lin Sanjiu lowered the tone of her voice, making herself sound more threatening and malicious, "For your

information, I don't care much about getting your lives. I will just tear off each of your limbs... I wonder how long you guys with a double life reduction rate would survive without all four limbs..."

The main lobby of the hospital became silent in an instant. A few Special Items which were flying in mid-air immediately stopped under their owners' control.

Everyone exchanged glances but no one moved for a short time. The nurse who was now just a pile of flesh muttered with a hoarse voice, "People who stay behind, attack—"

Lin Sanjiu flew forward and stomped on the woman's face, smashing it into the tiled floor. As broken tiles and dust flew everywhere, Lin Sanjiu glared coldly at her pursuers and spat, "Get lost."

The very next second, her pursuers scrambled in a panic, escaping with any means they had, as if they were rabbits that had been targeted by a gigantic beast. They quickly disappeared from her sight.

Lin Sanjiu felt a sense of relief.

She waited for a few seconds and after she was sure that the main lobby was empty, she wasted no time rushing back to Zone A on the second floor. When she pushed open the door to room A218, a flat black shadow suddenly flew toward her. Lin Sanjiu shifted her body to one side and evaded an almanac page. She quickly shouted, "It's me!" Reno and Rena, who had been readying themselves for battle, quickly let out long sighs of relief.

"How is it going?" Lin Sanjiu asked hurriedly as she sprinted to her body.

Without any words from the others, Lin Sanjiu was stunned when she saw her own body.

"I could never anticipate this situation in a million years," the bicolor cat sighed. He hit the machine heavily with his paw and

continued dejectedly, "The cells are too aggressive. Once I created that pseudo-environment, their activity level exploded..."

The original appearance of the person lying on the surgery table had changed completely.

The body's honey-colored skin was now somewhat translucent and even had a tinge of green. That color reminded Lin Sanjiu of dolphins. On top of that, Lin Sanjiu's physical body was visibly growing taller. In one minute, her height had grown from 1.7m to 1.8m. Lin Sanjiu almost couldn't recognize herself if not for the fact that her facial features were still the same.

"After these invasive cells merged with your original cells, they multiplied very quickly. Right now, those invasive cells have already taken over 50% of your body..."

Before the cat doctor finished his sentence, Mrs. Manas suddenly bellowed in Lin Sanjiu's mind, "What are you waiting for? Quick, go back to your body. Those cells possess Higher Consciousness, there is no way any doctor can control them, you're the only one who can do it!"

"But, how am I supposed to go back—" Lin Sanjiu barely uttered those words. Suddenly, with a single thought, she leaned toward her own physical body as if she had practiced it many times before.

Her higher consciousness body which had accompanied her through multiple battles, which had annihilated countless enemies, which was as hard as a diamond... The moment it touched her physical body, her higher consciousness body dissipated into small gentle dots of light, as if it was snow melting with the arrival of a spring breeze. The light disappeared into every inch of her physical body, from her skin, muscles, and flesh. With every breath, the light gradually faded from the air.

The siblings and the cat doctor froze and watched in a daze as the physical body absorbed the dots of lights which filled the room. After some time, there wasn't a single trace of Lin Sanjiu's higher

consciousness body in the room. After the spots of lights fully disappeared, the body on the surgery table stopped growing. The greenish tinge had also dimmed. The cat doctor stared at Lin Sanjiu's body very closely. He made his breathing lighter as if he was afraid that he would affect the battle within the woman's body.

"Is it succ-successful?" Reno choked, he looked at his sister and then at the cat. "When she wakes up, who will she be?"

After he said that, the person on the surgery table suddenly opened her eyes.

Chapter 284: Way Back Home 3

Half a minute after the person on the surgery table opened her eyes; there was absolute silence in the room. No one moved.

Reno only realized at this point that he and his sister had been too rash. If anything went wrong with the "cell activation" process, the person that would wake up would not be the original Lin Sanjiu they knew. Considering Lin Sanjiu's combat capabilities, there was no way they could win against her.

Reno's palms turned slightly sweaty. The teenager controlled his breathing as he watched the woman slowly getting up. Her current body was very different from her previous appearance as a higher consciousness entity.

Her arms and legs had been lengthened. When she stood up, her slender, flowy figure was breathtakingly beautiful. She was taller than Reno by a head. Her body figure seemed perfectly sculpted as if specifically designed to encompass a boundless amount of strength and speed. Unfortunately, her skin still had a greenish tinge as if the battle within her body was still ongoing.

The singlet and the combat pants she wore now appeared shorter on her current body, so her well-defined abs were now exposed. The white bandage around her neck was covered with dirt and dust. Somehow, it contrasted with her pair of amber eyes which were now lighter than before. They were almost crystal clear.

Reno froze for a moment. He examined Lin Sanjiu's eyes closely for a few seconds and came to the conclusion that Lin Sanjiu's irises had indeed become lighter.

At that moment, he could not see any confusion or puzzlement in her eyes. They seemed soulless as if it belonged to a robot without thoughts.

The woman—the siblings didn't know if they should call her Lin

Sanjiu—looked around. Her gaze was empty. Reno immediately pulled his sister to one side, intuitively trying to avoid the woman's empty, meaningless gaze.

The cat doctor was standing behind Lin Sanjiu. He seemed to suddenly sense that something was wrong. He narrowed his eyes and stared at her back for some time and couldn't help making a "huh?". At the same time, the woman shifted her empty gaze. Before Reno and Rena saw her movements clearly, they heard a loud boom. A large hole replaced the spot where the cat doctor was standing just a moment ago.

The siblings were so shocked that they nearly cried out. Thankfully, they spotted the small figure of the bicolor cat flashing past. The usually very elegant cat doctor crawled out from the bottom of the surgery table in a rather embarrassing manner.

Lin Sanjiu did not follow up with an attack. She frowned and appeared to be in pain. In the end, she didn't move.

Even though everything appeared calm on the surface, Lin Sanjiu was fighting the hardest and riskiest battle she ever faced within her own body. As her original cells were already dead, her revival was only possible because of the merger between the resilient invasive cells and her original cells, and the propagation of these hybrid cells. In other words, Lin Sanjiu was considered a 'foreign invader' in this particular body. If she wanted to regain control over her body under such circumstances... first, she would have to deal with Nüwa's higher consciousness.

Even though she only had to deal with the very small amount of higher consciousness that Nüwa left in her body, that bit of higher consciousness was still alarmingly pure and powerful. Nüwa's higher consciousness had a totally different nature in contrast with Lin Sanjiu's diamond-like higher consciousness. Nüwa's higher consciousness was like a raging fire and possessed an aggression that almost seemed to aim for mutual destruction. They created havoc in Lin Sanjiu's every single blood vessels. They tore

at Lin Sanjiu's sanity almost as if they wanted just to tear her apart.

Surrounded by this extremely destructive fire-like higher consciousness, Lin Sanjiu struggled to prevent her own higher consciousness from unraveling while launching her own attacks at Nüwa's higher consciousness. Each time she clashed with that foreign higher consciousness, the pain she felt was so intense that her higher consciousness could almost break. Unfortunately, she had no other choice. After she recovered her strength, she would charge at that vast ember red which represented Nüwa's higher consciousness.

As the battle within Lin Sanjiu's body was still ongoing, externally, she started behaving very erratically. Most of the time, she would just stand still with a vacant look on her face. Occasionally, when one party was winning, it would take a few stiff steps. However, no one could predict whether she wouldn't suddenly lose control and start attacking if she was disturbed by an external sound.

When the cat doctor saw the siblings' face turning paler and paler as they grew nervous, he waved his paws to the siblings as if he was hinting at something. However, the siblings simply did not understand what the cat's gestures meant.

The cat doctor sighed soundlessly. Just when he was feeling troubled, they heard a loud, hoarse voice from the nurse downstairs once again: "The rules have changed! There will be no transfer of lives when patients and family members attack each other. The current Patient Zero would exist until one side loses. This is your last chance! Attack Patient Zero, she is in A218!"

Lin Sanjiu was startled by the voice. All her muscles quivered. The cat doctor and the siblings quickly retreated a few steps away from her. Noticing that she wasn't about to attack them, and realizing that Lin Sanjiu no longer looked like Patient Zero, they were somewhat relieved.

Unfortunately, this tranquility did not last for long. After the nurse screeched those words, they heard the faint sounds of people's voices coming from one end of the corridor outside. Lin Sanjiu's threat was certainly vicious but considering the more dire situation that their lives were in immediate danger, the posthumans had to accept the risk of attacking her.

The siblings and the cat watched as Lin Sanjiu frowned harder. Cold sweat slid down her forehead profusely. She seemed to be in deep agony. There was no way she could fight right now, and even defending herself seemed questionable. As the footsteps grew closer and closer, Rena grabbed the cat doctor's shoulder before he could escape. When the cat doctor turned to look at the girl, he saw the teenage girl's hopeful face as she said, "Dr. Hu, you will fight together with us, right?"

"Oh, well, regarding that... I am actually very busy, and I don't have any fighting abilities..." Meowie Hu tried to make excuses as his large eyes blinked. The siblings dragged him to the entrance, almost as if they couldn't hear what he just said. Just when the bicolor cat felt his paws turning cold from sweat, a crescent-like beam shot through the door. The cat felt a slight warmth from the tip of his ear. Then, the beam of light hit Lin Sanjiu's body. A white light exploded in the room.

"It's successful!"

Someone in the corridor yelled out suddenly. Before the light faded, a few posthumans rushed into the room. As white lights flashed in the room, the figure of a tall, slender woman caught everyone's attention.

The white light in the room dyed Lin Sanjiu's skin. She slowly looked up and revealed her row of teeth faintly.

"You wanted to see me?"

It was as if an ancient behemoth had awoken from its sleep.

Chapter 285: The Last Day Of The Provincial Hospital

Rip. Lin Sanjiu tore a piece of dark green fabric off her pants and threw it aside casually. It fell on top of the pile of clothes she previous wore with her higher consciousness body. The pair of combat pants on her physical body was now ill-fitting. Without much consideration, she tore off the legs of her pants, effectively modifying it into a pair of hot shorts. From her "devil-may-care" attitude, it was obvious that she didn't think much of the over twenty posthumans there.

Extraordinarily, none of those posthumans moved during that time. Lin Sanjiu stretched her stiff neck before smiling faintly at them. Before she wasn't smiling, it didn't seem so serious. However, now that she was staring straight at them, some of them immediately felt a chill down their bodies because the woman that was standing in front of them didn't seem that... human.

It was clear that the woman wasn't a duoluo zhong. However, she certainly didn't possess the distinct sense of vitality that normal, living humans had. No one could put a finger on exactly what was wrong with her. The impression she gave was somewhat indescribable: she had an aura of death from head to toe as if she was some sort of behemoth that had just escaped from hell. When she looked at the group of posthumans, it was as if she was trying to curb her voracious hunger.

Anyone who was still alive and had been to the Twelve Worlds Centrum based on their own capabilities definitely possessed something more than reckless courage. For any posthumans, especially the people from the Twelve Worlds Centrum, there was one single characteristic that would determine their survival. It was not their evolved ability or how powerful their attacks were. Rather, it was their ability to judge an opponent's strength and

capabilities, and thus, avoid offending and challenging people like Puppeteer. That was the key to survival in the Twelve Worlds Centrum.

Even though they were bound by the new rules in the hospital, no one was willing to make the first move even after a long time. Everyone was on the edge, almost as if they were trying to find a win-win solution for their survival. Anyone placed in a situation where you would have to choose between dying immediately and dying ten days later would similar exhaust any means available.

Lin Sanjiu suddenly exhaled softly. She closed her eyes and flexed her ten fingers. It was really difficult for her to hold herself back.

The countless cells in her body, which weren't even really hers to begin with, were infused with Nüwa's fiery higher consciousness that continued raging through her body. Its attacks did not weaken as it invaded over and over again. Lin Sanjiu finally understood the Neuhumes a little.

Even though she didn't feel any particular emotions right now, she could oddly sense that if she didn't control herself and walked over, she would erase all traces of those posthumans from the face of this planet without even batting an eye.

Perhaps, this might be an inappropriate analogy. However, it felt as casual as a housewife wiping off dirt on a table with a washcloth.

"You must control yourself," Mrs. Manas warned. "If you really fight them and lose control, that thing in your body might just take the opportunity..."

Lin Sanjiu already knew this. If it wasn't because of that faint inkling that there would be serious consequences if she just let herself go like that, she wouldn't hold herself back right now. She exhaled. Crooking her head, she eyed the posthumans in front of her.

"Filth."

A single word suddenly appeared in her mind.

"When can I clean this up..."

Lin Sanjiu was alarmed when she realized that she had these thoughts in her head. Before she could even make sense of her thoughts, a delicate sweet voice ranged out, "Say, if you don't want to fight, why don't you guys just move aside."

That voice instantly caught everyone's attention. They saw a bicolor cat sitting on the floor facing them with its back as if it wasn't too pleased. Both his tone of voice and the aura he exuded was extremely solemn, except for his ears with slight bald patches that revealed his gloomy mood.

The cat doctor's amazing ability was immediately effective. The expressions of the first few posthumans who had seen him quickly changed. They quickly displayed their respect to the cat, with no awareness that the people behind them still had expressions as if they had seen a ghost. One of the men bowed and sought Dr. Hu's opinion earnestly, "As you know, we don't wish to create any trouble but..."

"You don't have a choice due to the rules of this hospital," Dr. Hu nodded before trying to educate them patiently. "As a doctor, I care about my patients. I don't wish for the patients in this hospital to be harmed. There is actually a solution to this situation even if you don't fight."

"What... what solution?" one of the people in the crowd asked and immediately explained, "We don't wish to bully this lady just because we have more people on our side..."

Before the person could finish his sentence, a person beside him threw something at him that muted his voice. If Lin Sanjiu felt that she had been belittled and became angry, this situation would be even harder to settle.

"All of you are really stupid," Dr. Hu laughed drily. "I can't believe you didn't think of something so simple."

The crowd exchanged glances, feeling at a loss.

"All of you entered this mutated building and got bound by the rules of this place. If you want to get out of this situation, what should you do?" The cat frisked his tail on the ground. From the perspective of the siblings who were more familiar with him, they could tell that the cat doctor was planning something.

"You can just demolish the building!"

The cat doctor's words sounded very authoritative, perhaps because he was a doctor in the hospital. When Lin Sanjiu saw the expressions on the posthumans' faces, she felt an immediate sense of relief.

To be honest, she wasn't keen on fighting with these people especially when the condition of her body was still unstable. It certainly wasn't a problem for her to defeat this rag-tag group of posthumans, but she was more worried about the possible side effects.

All the humans in the room ought to be ashamed of themselves because none of them could match the eloquence of the bicolor cat. After the cat doctor said those very convincing words in his charming way, the crowd immediately opened a path for him. They watched as the cat doctor led the lethal human weapon and the pair of siblings out of the hospital.

The nurse, which was just a mush of flesh on the ground, was simply stunned.

Once they got out of the hospital, the cat doctor, with sparkling eyes, gestured to his group members with his paws.

"Come, let's hide here and watch them demolish the building," Meowie Hu leaped into some shrubs nearby. Then, he stuck his little cat head out from the shrubs showing his gleeful face, "I was

just bullsh*tting just now. I don't really know what would happen!"

The three people beside him turned silent for a moment.

Lin Sanjiu let out a faint sigh. Meanwhile, they heard the sound of an explosion. Thick smoke rose from the second floor of the hospital and the fire from the hospital cast a red light over their faces.

"This started back in my hometown," she said rather helplessly. "Everywhere I go, buildings are bound to collapse..."

Chapter 286: Parting

The huge fire in the Provincial Hospital raged until that afternoon before it gradually abated. By that time, Lin Sanjiu and her group had already left the hospital and were making plans for the remaining days in this world as they walked around aimlessly.

After they had gone through yet another round of life-earning event at Mausoleum Elementary School, the lives deducted from them and their current lives finally added up to 108. In other words, they could finally complete this long-lasting pocket dimension with a large active area which had descended on them many days before.

Even though they had confirmed the situation with the cat doctor over and over again, on the 108th day, the siblings woke up early in the morning and checked each other's back every few minutes for quite some time. They were eager for the numbers on their back to disappear and the moment it occurred, the two children couldn't help cheering non-stop.

"Since the numbers are gone, you better leave as soon as possible," the cat doctor peered down at them. Perhaps, all cats had this bad habit. The thing Meowie Hu liked most when speaking was to climb up to a high spot and look down on the humans below. "I think you should take the train and leave this area as quickly as possible."

"Sir, are you afraid that people might think that we still have numbers on our back and ambush us," Reno asked reverently.

"No," the cat looked at the three humans below him as he sat atop a clothes closet, "I vaguely remembered something. If you stay for an hour within the active boundaries of this pocket dimension even after the numbers disappear from your body, the pocket dimension would automatically assume that you wish to continue for another 108 days..."

Before he could finish his sentence, the siblings leaped up immediately.

"What are you waiting for? Let's get out of here! Quick!" Rena was so scared that they would be dragged into another round in this pocket dimension that she was already standing at the doorway, beckoning, "Hurry up! Let's go!"

Lin Sanjiu stood up sluggishly. Recently, whenever she was not fighting, she would move very slowly like a sloth. According to Mrs. Manas, this was because her body had not regained its full vitality, so it had not fully recovered from its hibernation state. When she walked to the door, she suddenly realized that something was amiss. She turned behind herself and saw that the bicolor cat was still sitting on top of the closet.

"Let's go. Why aren't you moving?" she asked, puzzled.

"You guys can go. Why do you want to bring me along?" Meowie Hu said in a matter-of-fact manner and crooked his head, "I am a cat from this world."

The three humans froze. The room became silent for a few seconds. During this time, they had spent so much time with the cat doctor that they had already treated his presence as something that was very natural to them. None of them expected that the cat doctor would suddenly refuse to travel with them.

"But... but," Rena repeated "but" many times, yet, she still couldn't find the appropriate words. "Don't you want to leave Kisaragi Station..."

The cat doctor licked his paws elegantly.

"I wonder if that visa you talked about would work on a cat. Besides, I have a pretty decent life in Kisaragi Station." He nodded his head in a dignified manner, "Though, I am very happy to have had friends with me over this period of time."

"We can try!" Rena felt a little desperate, "We usually bring two

extra nameless visas. We'll give Jiu one and we can give you the other... Red Nautilus World is way better than this place. Honestly!"

"Really..." the cat doctor watched while she took out a visa, but his expression did not change much, "But, I am a cat. I have strong attachments to my home."

The teenage girl immediately showed a very bitter expression and pouted. Even though Lin Sanjiu also felt reluctant to part with the cat, she let out a faint sigh and patted the children' shoulders, "If Dr. Hu wishes to stay, let's not make things difficult for him. Let's go. If we don't go now, we might run out of time."

The cat watched them silently without moving or speaking.

With drooping shoulders, the children walked out of the door almost in tears. Lin Sanjiu paused for a moment. She turned to look at the cat doctor before strutting to the closet.

"Take care of yourself," Lin Sanjiu was very upset when she looked at this beautiful companion who had helped her a lot during this period of time. "I know you can charm people, but don't be too reckless just because of that. Maybe, someday, you might meet someone with higher consciousness just like me... After we leave, you should find and stay in a place with fewer posthumans..." she advised softly.

The cat's pair of emerald eyes flashed in the dim light, making it difficult to read his thoughts.

Lin Sanjiu sighed again. She was much taller now, so she could touch the top of the closet when she raised her arm. Lin Sanjiu reached out for the cat slowly; she wanted to stroke Meowie's fur.

The cat rubbed his forehead against her hand on his own initiative. He made a soft mewing sound. The feeling of his fluffy fur made her hand a little itchy.

"I will visit you again in the future when I have the chance," Lin

Sanjiu said slowly.

Even though she said that, she knew it in her heart that in these unpredictable apocalyptic worlds it was difficult to see someone again after parting.

When the three humans walked out from the building, they turned back to look at the small figure of the cat standing at the window. They couldn't help feeling somewhat gloomy.

Heeding the cat doctor's suggestions, they sprinted and quickly found a station called "Old Vine Station". Just as before, after waiting for a short while, a train chugged into the train station and stopped. Then, the chugging train took them away from the active area of the pocket dimension speedily. Away from the provincial hospital and away from Meowie Hu.

Even after the cat's charm wore off, the two children still felt very dejected. Reno had even forgotten about his fear of cats as he sat in the train with a very despondent face.

Counting the days which had passed, they didn't have much time left in Kisaragi Station. Reno and Rena had arrived in this world one week earlier than Lin Sanjiu so they would naturally be sent away a week earlier.

Ever since the apocalypse descended upon her world, this was the first time that Lin Sanjiu had a clear idea of the world she was heading next. Holding the nameless visa in her hand, she felt a rare sense of apprehension.

The train slowly stopped. Apparently, it had reached another station. The humans on the train were unconcerned. They were discussing their plans for Red Nautilus. After deciding on a meeting point, the siblings informed Lin Sanjiu about various things she had to be aware of. Lin Sanjiu was taken aback a few times as she listened to them.

Naturally, no one boarded the train at this station.

When the doors made the beeping sounds before closing, they suddenly heard a faint sound from outside the train.

"Meeeeoooowwww—"

It was a long mew.

Before they could react, a black shadow hit the closed train doors with a thud. Lin Sanjiu responded the quickest, she immediately broke a window with a punch. As the train started moving, she scooped up the small, black figure who was outside the train—

"I changed my mind!" the cat said bashfully. He lost a bit of fur when Lin Sanjiu clutched him. "It is difficult to find people who understand you, so let's go—"

Lin Sanjiu looked up and caught a glimpse of a few people who had rushed into the station that their train just pulled out from. Those were probably the cat doctor's pursuers. She eyed the cat on the floor of the train.

Chapter 287: The Famous Red Nautilus

Dark gray clouds hung low over Kisaragi Station World. There wasn't a single ray of sunlight anywhere. The world was just murky, foggy and gray. There was no sign of the sun even after a very long time. The infrastructures left behind by humanity lay silent in the vast, dead silence. Only the occasional sound of explosions reminded the survivors that this wasn't a ghost town.

Various buildings, streets, and districts slid past the windows of a whistling train. The chugging sound of the train continued echoing in the empty surroundings long after the train had disappeared into the scenery.

A single glimpse of the yellow, dismal looking train was sufficient to make a lasting impression. However, the train that just left Fuxi Station was a little different than usual. There were actually two posthumans waiting for the train in Fuxi Station. However, when the train stopped as they watched expectantly, a face peeked out from the first carriage. An unruly teenage boy stuck his chin at them and shouted, "Sorry, wait for the next train."

He spoke in an audacious manner; it was as if he owned the train.

Even though he seemed very unreasonable, his particular behavior and remark made it obvious that trying to board the train would spell unnecessary conflict. In the end, the two posthumans took a step back without saying a word. They watched as the train doors closed once again, then, the train pulled away from the station and out of their sight.

"I didn't expect that humans are so vengeful," the cat laughed wryly, feeling aggrieved. "How would I know that there was a penalty for demolishing that building and that their lives would immediately fall to one? Besides, even though their lives fell to one, they didn't die. Wasn't that their main goal originally? They have zero manners and don't know how to be grateful at all! Don't

you guys think I'm right?" the cat said with an indignant voice.

Naturally, the siblings nodded their heads profusely but Lin Sanjiu found it quite funny.

"You're conceited," she chided as she laughed. "You even went back to see the condition of the hospital... But, things turned out well. Since that is the case, you just have to accept your fate and come with us."

Meowie Hu immediately lay on his tummy and placed his head on his front paw. He blinked his emerald eyes showing disinterest in what Lin Sanjiu had said.

"Didn't you say that my body would continue changing?" while she said this, Lin Sanjiu looked down at her long legs unconsciously. "If the cells are not only going to make me tall, I sure there are many changes in my body that you could examine and research."

Meowie Hu yawned. "You aren't really that fun. I have to be too careful when dealing with living humans..." he said lazily through his row of sharp, pointy teeth.

Lin Sanjiu felt that she was wasting too much effort to keep this little fellow around. She thought for a bit and continued, "I heard that there are lots of delicious cuisines in Red Nautilus. In addition, the next time we kill someone, we will definitely give you that corpse."

Meowie Hu looked up. After some time, he finally spoke to the siblings reluctantly, "How do you use that thing? Give it to me."

Rena passed their last nameless visa to the cat hurriedly, "You can just write your own name on the visa and you will be sent to that destination. It's very easy! But, how long have you been in Kisaragi Station?"

The cat doctor's existence was very unique. They really couldn't tell if he could travel through the different worlds.

"I am two years old this year," the cat said with an inexplicable pride, "But, it has only been slightly more than a year since I became a doctor."

The three humans immediately stared at him.

"One year and...?" Rena was writing the cat's name on his behalf and paused midway. He had only written: "Meowie H—".

"And one or two months, I suppose," the cat said with a crooked head after some contemplation. "Cough, it has been such a long time. Who would remember..."

Reno leaped up at once. "Write it quickly! Write quickly!" he urged his sister. Lin Sanjiu and Rena were instantly aware of the situation as well. The cat doctor had been in Kisaragi Staton for almost 14 months. If his existence allowed him to be transferred to another world, he might be leaving soon. To ensure that he would be sent to the right place, they knew that they would have to complete his visa quickly and secure it on his body.

After completing his visa, they found a thin string and secured the visa around Meowie Hu's neck. Though the cat did not really like the arrangement, finally he did bear with it.

"From the looks of things, Dr. Hu would be the first to leave. I will repeat what I had told Jiu once more—" Rena looked at the cat with a serious expression and turned to Lin Sanjiu as if to signal her to listen up. "Every single world in the Twelve Worlds Centrum, including Red Nautilus, is divided and controlled by various big and small factions. The distribution of the territories is very complicated. Unfortunately, when you are sent to a particular world, you would spawn in a random location. We have no way of predicting where you would appear so don't bring up our names recklessly. Secondly, we need to find a good meetup spot."

Meetup spots are locations in worlds that are classified as no man's land. Due to the disputes between the various factions and organizations, over time, these territories became good places to

remain hidden and also for people to meet up.

Although this information sounded pretty normal, Lin Sanjiu was simply speechless when she heard what Rena said next.

"Once you arrive at Red Nautilus, the residents would recognize at first sight that you guys aren't the native inhabitants of the Twelve Worlds Centrum, so..." Rena stressed each of her words, "if you meet anyone who strikes up a conversation with you, don't even care about them. They would offer you a place to stay, exchange money or even offer to give you a tour of the place. Just ignore them but don't offend them. Just act like you don't see them and just walk away."

Rena's advice sounded rather familiar to Lin Sanjiu. In the past, she had read something like that in various travel guides...

The cat doctor didn't seem to find that weird, he just nodded solemnly.

"Oh! But if you see a stall selling maps, you can have a look," Reno added. As he said that, he took something out, "You won't have money when you first arrive. Take these. You can buy two maps with this. If you are hungry, you can even get a bun with the remaining money—"

Lin Sanjiu stared wide-eyed at the thing that was placed in her hand. There were three long deep red crystals in the palm of her hand. The crystals had been neatly carved and were well-polished.

"But, aren't the worlds that form the Twelve Worlds Centrum also apocalyptic worlds?

Before Reno finished his sentence, he stood stunned in the same spot.

The spot where the cat doctor was previously still felt a little warm.

Chapter 288: The Day Before Leaving For A New World

Unexpectedly, the following weeks were very peaceful.

After the cat doctor left, duoluo zhongs rarely appeared in front of the siblings, perhaps because they had a human weapon beside them. The siblings felt restless every day as if they had nowhere to vent their endless energy. It seemed as though they had forgotten all their previous near-death experiences and started complaining about their boredom. Towards the last few months, the children started roaming the street every day searching for pocket dimensions while dragging Lin Sanjiu around. Quoting themselves directly, they said, "Anyway, we came to Kisaragi Station to train!"

Through their admirable perseverance, they finally entered a multi-stage pocket dimension.

Even though the pocket dimension wasn't dangerous, it did make them impatient and anxious. They weren't even in the pocket dimension for two days when Lin Sanjiu was so vexed that she beat up the siblings. In the end, they managed to escape the pocket dimension with a whole lot of strategizing, pure effort, as well as quite a bit of luck. After the siblings had been pummeled, the children, covered with bruises, finally behaved themselves and developed a less dangerous hobby.

"Why don't we try this today?" Rena buried her head in a recipe book as she spoke unhurriedly, "We don't have any fresh abalone but we can use the frozen prawns in the kitchen as a substitute..."

This was the first time Lin Sanjiu, who was sitting cross-legged on a large comfortable bed, could enjoy the comforts brought by an apocalypse. Thanks to the children's rich kids syndrome, they were now staying at a beautiful five-star hotel.

The last two worlds Lin Sanjiu had been through probably

shaped her habits so she had never considered the fact that she didn't have to just settle for camping at some random place. Kisaragi Station's erratic electrical and water supply brought them the greatest benefit here. Lin Sanjiu finally fulfilled her bath cravings. Every day, she would spend at least half an hour in a jacuzzi bathtub. After they discovered that the hotel kitchen was stocked with food supplies, Rena would examine the hotel menu to decide what to cook every day. Meanwhile, Reno loved the rooftop swimming pool so much that he was could almost be called a pool maintenance staff.

They didn't spend that many comfortable and carefree days in the hotel, but the experience helped alleviate a lot of the anxiety Lin Sanjiu had regarding the next world.

The five-star hotel they were in was 20-stories high. Standing by the window of this presidential suite, they could see almost half the city. The residential area where they met that building spirit was now like the mouth of a toothless kid. There were only a few sparse buildings as if someone had removed many of the previously existing ones. The original building spirit which had given them a lot of trouble had also disappeared from its original spot. There was just an empty lot there—probably because it had been captured by Silvan.

When they first moved into the hotel, many other posthumans from the Twelve Worlds Centrum also had their eyes on the property. However, Lin Sanjiu, who had regained her cards with her Special Items, was even stronger than before. Her infamy had spread and the people around knew that there was a tall woman with a bandage around her neck living in the hotel. Knowing that she was a very difficult character to deal with, nobody wanted to venture to the hotel anymore.

As the peaceful days passed, it was soon time for the siblings to be transported.

"Since Dr. Hu didn't manage to get his share, we will give this to

you, Jiu." Reno placed a few dark-red crystals in Lin Sanjiu's hand with a very pained expression, "See these bigger crystals? You can get 10 smaller ones for these... These crystals only come in three sizes. We use a decimal currency..."

"A meal cost about 45 of the smallest crystals. When you reach Red Nautilus, don't get cheated stupidly," Rena looked very astute with money when she said this.

"Among the worlds which belong to the Twelve Worlds Centrum, Red Nautilus is the smallest. It shouldn't be hard to find our meeting point," Reno added and Lin Sanjiu nodded.

"On top of that, I still need to explain a few common emblems to you... Just in case you get too hot-tempered and pick a fight with someone you shouldn't," Rena said as she took out a pen and a piece of paper from the bedside drawer. Using her simply lamentable drawing skills, she explained, "You already know this emblem with eagle wings and a warhammer. This represents the Munition Factory. These people get lots of requests, so they are very proud. They are quite neutral as long as you mind your own business and don't get involved with them. They have many members. How should I put this... They are pretty corny."

Ignoring Lin Sanjiu's flabbergasted expression, Rena continued, "The people you need to be very careful around are those who wear a small marionette earring. All these people are Puppeteers' subordinates. There are real people and also puppets. Anyway, could you remove the bandage around your neck? Oh, is that so? Then, I guess you don't have a choice. Well, one of the distinguishing features about you that the Puppeteer listed is that bandage around your neck, so..."

Lin Sanjiu touched her bandage subconsciously but she wasn't too concerned about it. After that whole incident involving the merger with those Neuhumes cells, she was not only 10cm taller but her facial features were also deeper. The color of her amber eyes was now so much lighter that it could almost refract sunlight.

Nowadays, when she stood in front of a mirror, she almost couldn't recognize herself, let alone the Puppeteer's subordinates recognizing her.

When she thought about this topic, Lin Sanjiu felt a naggy feeling about something. Adopting an "out of sight, out of mind" psyche, she quickly dismissed the thought and smiled at the siblings, "I know. Don't worry. When you guys get back, remember to look for the cat doctor."

The two kids nodded. Reno suddenly remembered something, "You mentioned that you wanted to meet up with your previous companions but that meeting point isn't in Red Nautilus. I remember that there is a famous meeting point in Ragnarök World. That world... how should I put this... Even though I have never been there, I heard that it isn't easy there... Anyway, you may have to wait until the next time to go there."

As long as she could meet them again, Lin Sanjiu didn't mind if it was earlier or later. Besides, Sayo was a local there, so Lin Sanjiu wasn't too worried. She agreed and made a note about it in her mind. She chatted a while more with the siblings and asked them more questions about Ragnarök World until it was about time for them to leave.

Reno and Rena started to fade suddenly.

"Okay, let's meet in two weeks' time." Rena tilted her head and gave Lin Sanjiu a wide grin.

"See you in two weeks." Lin Sanjiu smiled.

Chapter 289: Lin Sanjiu's Hyperostosis

As it turned out, Reno and Rena's concerns over Lin Sanjiu being identified by Puppeteer were unfounded.

Seven days after the two teenagers left, it was almost time for Lin Sanjiu to be transported to the next world. Lin Sanjiu had spent most of her time in Kisaragi Station as a higher consciousness entity. In retrospection, she discovered that she obtained only a pathetic number of Special Items during this 14 months. She only had two books, [A Girl's Sorrow] and [A World History of Art]. Furthermore, she would have to sell one of the books to earn some living expenses for her time at Red Nautilus.

After she threw away the vending machine that she had converted at the start of her journey, Lin Sanjiu did not have anything else to tidy up. After some contemplation, she searched through the hotel rooms gathering some blankets and pillows just in case she needed them in the future. From a certain perspective, it was very rare to find a world like Kisaragi Station where human artifacts and items were still so well-preserved. After searching through the entire hotel, Lin Sanjiu finally found the warehouse of the housekeeping department on the fourth floor.

She stuck two fingers out and flicked the door lock gently. The lock crumbled like it was made of biscuit and made a powdery pile on the floor. The door creaked open. Just as she expected, the warehouse was filled with towels, toothpaste, toothbrush, toilet paper and all sorts of daily necessities. After Lin Sanjiu's [Planar World] had upgraded once more, the maximum weight of the item she could convert already reached three tonnes. She wrapped everything she wanted in a big bed sheet she placed on the floor. With a single thought, the floor was empty. Even with a conservative estimate, those supplies could last for at least three years.

After she casually killed off a duoluo zhong which had dangled its

head out from a shelf, Lin Sanjiu started walking out of the warehouse leisurely. When she placed her hand on the doorknob, she had a vague feeling that something was wrong. She turned her head and looked. The warehouse was very normal, she did not spot anything unusual.

Oddly, she did feel a very distinct weird itch on her back. Lin Sanjiu slowly turned back and took two steps out of the warehouse. At the same time, she activated her higher consciousness scanning. When she noticed a black shadow, she turned behind very quickly. She realized that it was just an empty plastic bag.

After feeling a very peculiar feeling all over her body, it took Lin Sanjiu two to three seconds before she realized that this feeling of uneasiness came from her own body.

She lowered her head and looked at herself. She saw her long legs, arms and her body which did not even have a pound of excess fat. She seemed normal. She used her hand to touch her back and was instantly stunned.

Shortly after, she sprinted down the hallway noisily and rushed in front of the full body mirrors in the main lobby. When she saw herself in the mirror, she couldn't help letting out a soft fearful cry.

"What's this..."

Her previous "out of sight, out of mind" attitude came back to bite her. She could no longer deny and escape her worry. The cat doctor had warned her that theoretically her body might be further altered. It had finally had been proven.

In the mirror, there was a reflection of a tall, slender woman with an icy expression who was standing very still. Her pair of light amber eyes were usually icy cold, yet, right now they held an indescribable expression...

There were two large bony wing-like projections protruding from her back. They peeked out from her shoulder very slowly, piercing through the material of her singlet, before they stretched upwards.

No, they weren't just bone protrusions. They were much closer to wings made of bones. After seeing that pair of scary-looking, threatening "wings", Lin Sanjiu couldn't say a word even after a long time.

The bleach-white bones had a tight-interwoven structure and seemed very hard. Long fang-like spiny structures grew from the topmost section to the tips of the wings. As the joints of the wings moved, the spines moved menacingly like poisonous serpents that could attack any time. When the two bony wings finally stopped growing and settled for a fixed form, Lin Sanjiu felt her legs go weak. She wanted to just sit on the floor— but she couldn't even do something as simple as that— because the end of her wings stabbed themselves into the floor of the hotel's main entrance. They supported her body firmly and sturdily.

The wings, which were almost close to two meters, formed two large narrow triangles on her back when she retracted them. Even though she had not tried to extend them fully, she could see from the numerous joints that these wings were going to be astonishingly flexible.

"What the f*ck." Mrs. Manas, who usually portrayed herself as a role-model teacher, cursed.

Even though the cat doctor had already predicted such a possibility, Lin Sanjiu just couldn't imagine that such a mutation would occur even after she had grown taller.

"What... what are these two things? I remembered those Sages don't have things like these bony wings..." she mumbled weakly.

Mrs. Manas hesitated for some time without saying a word. The teacher seemed to be shocked by the view of her back. After quite a few minutes, she finally spoke softly and with uncertainty,

"Maybe, the sages that you see are just one type of species with that appearance?"

This explanation made a lot of sense. Lin Sanjiu turned and stared at her own reflection. She found herself momentarily speechless. After that, she looked down and eyed the tip of her wings.

There were about eight serrated spines forming the frame of the wings. Each of them had the girth of her arm and their tips had a metallic sheen. They didn't seem like they were made of bones but rather had a metal-like appearance. Lin Sanjiu tried to move the wings on her back and realized that it felt as though she was controlling a muscle or her little finger. With a single thought, her large left wing slowly opened up.

After she fully extended her left bony wing, its horizontal width reached more than 2 meters. It had already reached another end of the hotel lobby. With another thought, the serrated spines extended out with a swoosh. They tore through the air making a sound that seemed almost like a malicious spirit devouring a human. With another thought, the bony wings retracted quickly like a beast closing its mouth.

Mrs. Manas didn't say a word for a long time.

"Why don't you try flying?" she asked rather foolishly.

Though it was a somewhat disappointing, but very predictable, Lin Sanjiu couldn't fly with those bony wings. After they were fully extended, air would just slip through the gaps between the bones. Lin Sanjiu created a drift with her wings, but no matter how strong the drift was, her feet were still firmly planted to the ground.

"Can you withdraw the wings into your body?" Mrs. Manas thought of another question.

"I'll try," Lin Sanjiu wanted to reply but she realized that her

body was suddenly fading. From the looks of it, she would have to bring these two large wings to Red Nautilus.

Chapter 290: How To Buy A Bun In The Fourth World

Lin Sanjiu had to admit that she had already seen quite a few different worlds, from the Hyperthermal Hell with its unbridled desertification, Garden of Eden with its weird technologies and Kisaragi Station with its death-like silence...

However, none of these worlds had ever made her feel like a sort of... unsophisticated country bumpkin.

When Lin Sanjiu arrived at Red Nautilus, it was nighttime.

Two large moons hung in the dark red sky. They were like two stacked sheets of ice. The moons were so close to the ground that a person gazing at them would even suspect that their lunar craters were visible to the naked eye. Walking under the two large moons almost created a sort of soul-stirring sensation as if one was just floating in space.

The luminous moonlight pouring from the two moons were partially blocked by gigantic mountain-like shadows that covered the land. Lin Sanjiu stared at the black shadows. She strained and squinted her eyes but she just couldn't tell what those structures were.

Clearly, man-made structures wouldn't be that big. Even though she was looking at them from afar, the size of those structures seemed oddly out of place when compared to the size of a city. When she compared a skyscraper to one of those large mountain-like structures beside it, the skyscraper was like a grass sapling beside a hill. They created a mind-blowing contrast in terms of size.

It was as if Zeus had thrown down Mount Olympus and left a chain of mountain ranges resting on the horizon under the glistening red moonlight.

Lin Sanjiu looked around as if she was trying to get some clues from her surroundings. After a quick survey, she found out that she was lost, and this made her almost forget those large shadows in the distance.

She had arrived in an alley between two skyscrapers. She could look into the distance through this gap between the two buildings. Lin Sanjiu didn't know if she could count herself lucky. When she looked up, she realized that the skyscrapers were so tall that they disappeared into the clouds in the night sky. She couldn't even tell how many stories there were. As she walked a few steps down the alley, she realized that she was surrounded by a jungle of concrete and steel. She discovered that the particular alley, situated between the gap of two buildings, was so rare that it was one of a kind.

Above her, there were various flyovers segregated into twenty stories. The skyscrapers were so densely packed that there was barely any space for people to walk. She spotted smoke rising from some chimney somewhere. The sky with the large moons was well-sliced into various pieces by the countless overhead power lines as she walked through the alley with puddles of dirty water. The various elements combined to form a strange landscape of a technological wasteland. Lin Sanjiu could hear the vague sounds of vehicles driving by and human conversations. She suddenly felt a sense of long-lost novelty. It was as if she hadn't seen enough of this place. Almost as if she was in a reverie, she slowly walked along the small alley.

Her skeletal wings trailed behind her in the dusky night as she took her first step into a bustling city.

"Beep!" A sharp alarm suddenly pierced through the air. This was followed by some cries of alarm and complaints. A metallic flying vehicle managed to apply its brake in front of the building beside Lin Sanjiu. It was just in time. The vehicle wobbled in the air for quite some time, the driver seemed to spend quite some effort

before the vehicle stopped properly in mid-air.

Lin Sanjiu was amazed, she gazed at the flying vehicle for a few seconds. After that, she walked past the vehicle and continued walking through the strange new world.

There was a "Hostel— Only 35 small crystals per night" sign hanging haphazardly by the entrance of a building. It was so dirty that Lin Sanjiu could not even make out what its original color was. Beneath the sign, there were a few other translated words. Lin Sanjiu could only recognize the additional English and Japanese translations. The remaining languages were all very strange and she had never seen them before.

Looking around, she could see these multi-language signs hanging outside shops and stalls providing all sort of services. These signs covered the alley, clogged with dirty water, in a chaotic manner: "Special Item High Cash Conversion", "Half-priced Information Consultation", "Weapon Upgrade and Advanced Ability Training", "Free Special Item Appraisal", "Doomsday Survival Course", etc. There were so many signs that there was barely any space between them. The facades of the skyscrapers were also covered by layers upon layers of advertisements.

Even though Lin Sanjiu had a pair of retracted wings which were almost 2 meters long, surprisingly, she looked comparatively unremarkable. The people here had a very weird sense of fashion. The siblings' outfits could even be described as "very conservative" compared to the fellow residents of this world.

A cat-like shadow streaked across the other end of the alley. Shortly after, a woman wrapped in a skintight garment made of snow-white fish skin chased behind it, she seemed to shout something like, "Wait for me, my little baby!" About 45 degrees above Lin Sanjiu, a window opened. An old but energetic Taoist priest, with typical long white hair and a lofty appearance, stuck his head out. He started quarreling animatedly with his neighbor, a middle-aged woman with multiple rollers on her hair, in

Shanghainese.

Lin Sanjiu walked slowly through the street, feeling somewhat at a loss, like a country bumpkin who had just arrived at a large city.

"Missy, would you like a bun?" a refined-looking woman dressed in a red qipao smiled at her, beckoning, "In Red Nautilus, buns are our most famous snacks!"

Even a bun seller could tell that she was a newcomer to this world. Lin Sanjiu suddenly remembered what Reno said so she couldn't help feeling a little curious. She looked at the glass steamer in front of her inquisitively. The steam made it difficult to see the content in the steamer, so she asked, "What sort of steamed buns do you sell?"

"I sell all sorts of buns!" the woman replied cheerfully, the seller did not show even a slight bit of curiosity toward Lin Sanjiu's skeletal wings. "What color do you want? I have mysterious purple, elegant gray, romantic pink, classic black, refreshing green and sepia yellow. One bun costs one small crystal. How many do you want?"

Lin Sanjiu frozen for two seconds.

"I'll hav-have a sepia yellow and a refreshing green," she stammered slightly. She had no idea how she should phrase all her curious questions.

"Sure!" the woman in the qipao took out a piece of brown paper from nowhere and wrapped up two snow-white buns before handing them to Lin Sanjiu. Lin Sanjiu took out two red crystals of the smallest size and paid the woman. Next, she examined the buns closely but she couldn't see a tinge of sepia yellow. She was a little hesitant and didn't dare to eat the bun she clasped in her hands.

"You always operate your stall here?" she probed.

"Every time I come back to Red Nautilus, I would open my stall here," the woman in the qipao was rather friendly, "I just came

back, so I'll be here for 14 months. If you want to eat steamed bun again, you can always come back!"

"Ah, yeah, sure..." It was very obvious that this was the first time Lin Sanjiu was in one of the worlds within the Twelve Worlds Centrum. "Excuse me. How can I reach Seagral Square?"

That was the meeting point she and the siblings had agreed on.

"Oh gosh. That's far," though the woman in the qipao sounded just as friendly as before, her face revealed slightly that she wanted Lin Sanjiu to move away from her booth quickly, "Why don't you buy a map and check!"

Lin Sanjiu answered the woman with an agreeing tone, but she felt slightly embarrassed. Holding the buns in her hand, she continued walking and looking around. When she turned behind, she spotted a person, who seemed like a local, buying a few steamed buns from the woman in the qipao. After she saw him eating the buns nonchalantly, Lin Sanjiu placed the steaming, "refreshing green" bun near her mouth cautiously.

A refreshing scent of new leaves, like the smell of the forest reviving in early spring, wafted into her nose. Lin Sanjiu had no idea what sort of ingredients were in this bun, but she had never tasted such a wondrous fragrance in her mouth. It was as refreshing as nature yet had a sweet, dry aftertaste. When she chewed, she could taste a very faint bitterness. The taste of the complex amalgamation of flavors was simply marvelous.

After Lin Sanjiu finished that steamed bun very quickly, she spent a little time recalling the taste of the buns wistfully.

"These buns are certainly worthy of being Red Nautilus' most famous local snack," Lin Sanjiu thought to herself and looked at the remaining "sepia yellow" bun in her hand. Her curiosity grew and just as she was contemplating whether to eat the steamed bun immediately, she spotted a small shop selling maps. She hurried over.

There were more than ten types of maps of Red Nautilus. Lin Sanjiu didn't know which was good. After considering for a long time, she spent eight small crystals on a world map and an area map of the Cyber District she was in.

Lin Sanjiu stood at the side of the street and started examining the two maps side by side. After more than ten minutes, she placed the maps down, feeling a little stunned.

"Who said that Red Nautilus is very small?"

Cyber District was almost 10,000 kilometers away from Seagral Square. In other words, Lin Sanjiu needed to travel across half the planet.

Chapter 291: A Penny To Stifle Bone Growth

Even though Lin Sanjiu's current speed and stamina were at an incredible level, she didn't think she could travel 10,000 kilometers on foot. Although she could move fast enough to leave afterimages when she was fighting in Kisaragi Station, she was mainly creating sprint-like bursts with her leg muscles. If she had to run for long distances and keep up her pace, she couldn't run faster than 300 km/h.

Using 300 km/h as her average speed, she would need more than 30 hours to reach the Free District where Seagral Square was located. Even though traveling at this speed was faster than most vehicles and seemed slightly feasible, the journey between the Cyber District and the Free District wasn't just flat land. If Lin Sanjiu included the time that she needed for eating, resting, crossing the ocean, climbing through mountainous terrains, among others, she reckoned that she would need at least one to two months to cover this 10,000 km.

That didn't even include the possible unpredictable mishaps that may happen along the way. If she was unlucky, in extreme cases, she might need to go to another world before she could even reach the Free District.

"Damn it. Why was I thrown to a place so far away..." she grumbled as she looked at the map again, feeling unresigned. The two locations were not only far, but from the topological color codes, the terrains between them were also very complex. Setting aside the other issues, Lin Sanjiu had no idea how she could cross that stretch of sea which was the size of a corner of the Pacific Ocean.

Feeling frustrated because she didn't know how she could travel to the Free District, she didn't notice that her large wings and herself had totally blocked the view of the stall selling maps. The stall owner shot a glance at her every few seconds. When he

noticed another "country bumpkin" posthuman walking past his stall without noticing, he finally couldn't help calling out to her, "Hey, miss!"

"Huh?" Lin Sanjiu turned back to see a short, full-bearded stall owner who looked like a dwarf.

"Are you facing some problems?" the stall owner was certain apt at doing business, "Maybe, I could help you."

"Um, I want to go to the Free District." Lin Sanjiu smiled at him, feeling a little fretful. "But, it's too far."

"Are you planning to walk there?" the stall owner laughed. "I guess you are a newcomer. Look, let me explain things to you."

As he spoke, he took out another map, gesturing over the map and showing it to Lin Sanjiu, "This map shows the transport system and the territorial boundaries of Red Nautilus. Can you see this yellow mark? That is Airship Registration Point. Taking an airship is fast and safe. As long as you have the money, you can board any of these airships. You just have to transit two to three times and you'll reach the Free District."

"Oh, so there's just a place!" Lin Sanjiu was shocked. She immediately wanted to take the map from him but she noticed the stall owner smiling just as she reached for it. Then, she sighed, "How much is this?"

"Since you bought something from me just now, well, for a transport map and a territorial map, I will charge you one medium crystal."

That was obvious a non-local price, but Lin Sanjiu didn't really mind. She gave it a quick thought and finally handed the man a medium crystal.

The stall owner looked at her with a brimming smile and said, "Thank you! By the way, the prices of the airship tickets are fixed. You will see the prices outside the Airship Registration Point.

Don't get cheated."

Lin Sanjiu looked at him with a somewhat helpless expression. She took the maps from him but she did not leave immediately. "Mister, from the gaps between the buildings, I saw a large area covered with many huge black shadows. What are those?"

"Those?" the stall owner was a little surprised, "You don't know?"

Lin Sanjiu shook her head.

"Well, those are all Red Nautiluses! This world derived its name from those creatures."

Lin Sanjiu was startled by that revelation and gawked. She knew that this apocalyptic world had been invaded by a foreign organism known as Red Nautilus, but she didn't expect that they were so huge. Furthermore, she didn't expect that they were still here. "You me-mean there are still people fighting them now?"

"The battle ended long ago. Those are just the Nautilus' empty shells," the stall owner waved his arm dismissively, feeling slightly pleased.

Lin Sanjiu found it very hard to imagine how humans could win the battle against such huge opponents. She was caught up in that thought for a few seconds, following which, she quickly asked, "Oh yeah, which faction governs this Cyber District? Mister, have you heard of the Puppeteer before?"

"Oh! Yes." the short man suddenly seemed hesitant. He eyed her and mumbled, "But, I don't know much. Alright, don't try to find out too much. You will eventually learn about these things."

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling suspicious after the stall owner shooed her away with a few words.

However, just as he mentioned, she would eventually find out the things she needed to know about Red Nautilus. Once she meets Reno and Rena, she would naturally get her answers. Her priority right now was to head to the Airship Registration Point.

Dragging her two large wings behind her, she opened her map. Sometimes, she would look at the street names and sometimes she would try to get directions. She got her bearings very quickly and found out that the nearest Airship Registration Point was half a day's journey on foot.

As she had nothing else to do, Lin Sanjiu headed directly to the Airship Registration Point after getting the right directions. On her way there, she saw many novel, interesting and amusing sights but she didn't face any particular trouble. Both posthumans who had arrived at the Twelve Worlds Centrum through their efforts and native residents maintained a sort of comfortable distance and decorum between each other. Such a phenomenon was built on the foundation that it was possible for anyone here to have very powerful combative abilities.

Lin Sanjiu did not know this, but a woman like herself, who obviously appeared foreign from the first glance, on contrary, was shown more respect. The reason was simple: anyone who could enter the Twelve Worlds Centrum, despite the natural disadvantages they faced, wasn't simple people to deal with.

She reached the Airship Registration Point fairly quickly.

She heard that this particular registration point wasn't even an exceptional large boarding terminal. However, its entrance and its waiting area were comparable to an airport departure terminal on Earth. The silver metallic building had the shape of an egg. From the dark-colored glass windows of the building, Lin Sanjiu could only see some lights but she couldn't make out its interior.

Lin Sanjiu walked one round around the building and finally spotted a sign at the entrance hall some distance away. The word "Ticket office" was written in various languages. She immediately felt a little excited and walked briskly to the ticket office. Like many other posthumans, she looked up at the constantly changing digital signboard and tried to find the flight number and the price to her target destination. There weren't any direct flights to the

Free District. She had to either buy a flight journey with transfers or she had to make the transfers herself. Lin Sanjiu looked at the board for a while and suddenly felt an oncoming headache.

When she added the costs, the cheapest ticket price to the Free District cost 24 large crystal and 8 medium crystals.

All the money she had on her was only 2 medium crystals and 2 small crystals.

Chapter 292: It's Yellow And Meaty, that's just...

"Has it been four years?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself. She wasn't quite sure. After counting, Lin Sanjiu figured that it had been more than four years since she had thought about how she should earn money. Lin Sanjiu left the Airship Registration Point. After walking aimlessly for a while, she stood at the side of the street in a daze, holding all the money she had in her hand.

She would have looked even more pathetic if she could actually squat down beside the road. However, the wings on her back stopped her from doing so. When she was by herself, Mrs. Manas would usually appear and converse with her. However, even Mrs. Manas was stumped by the current situation.

"Didn't the siblings say you could sell your Special Items?" Mrs. Manas suggested, "Maybe, you could find a place that bought Special Items..."

Lin Sanjiu had seen quite a few "Special Items Cash Converter" sign on her way to the Airship Registration Point. However, they all had a distinctive feature—they were all hidden in some deserted archway or deep in some back alley. Their door frames were usually dilapidated, the paint was peeling from their walls and if one were to look into any of the stores, they would barely be able to see anything in the dark rooms.

From the first look, they all seemed very suspicious.

Since she wasn't familiar with this world, Lin Sanjiu wasn't willing to take such risks. After she let out a long sigh, she opened the transport map of the Cyber District. To be honest, even though the map was a little pricey, it provided a lot of detailed information. It showed the locations of the Airship Registration Points, the main roads, and landmarks like various shopping and business streets. In addition, various areas were shaded with a red

or black color code and labeled with "Do not trespass" in a few languages.

The red zones covered only a small area, as they were only a few fragmented zones. There was a symbol of a claymore beside each of these zones and there were the words "pocket dimension". This was something that was quite understandable. The Twelve Worlds Centrum had already existed for many years so there should be quite a lot of information about the pocket dimensions in these worlds, thus, in these worlds, it is also very unlikely that people would enter a pocket dimension unknowingly.

The black zones were labeled with a small symbol. The symbol was a picture of a smiling mermaid with open arms. Other than that symbol, they were not labeled with additional words.

"Are these areas controlled by a certain faction?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't help thinking.

Shifting her eyes away from the black zones, she noticed a shopping street. "Maybe, I can convert some cash there?" she mumbled doubtfully to herself.

All the shopping streets were marked with a symbol of a small dark red crystal. They certainly looked very attractive to Lin Sanjiu right now. The nearest shopping street was not far from her and she could just walk there. When Lin Sanjiu started moving again, she tried to retract her wings into her back but her large, menacing, skeletal wings remained stubbornly on her back. The heavy weight of her skeletal wings did partially contribute to their lethality. After dragging them around for almost a day, Lin Sanjiu's back felt slightly sore. Evidently, her back muscles had not fully adapted to this sudden additional burden.

"Really? How am I going to sleep if I can't retract them?" Lin Sanjiu grumbled softly as she walked, "Will I need to extend the wings and sleep on my stomach?"

When Mrs. Manas imagined that scene, she found it rather

funny. She thought about it and suggested, "Actually, right now you're still not used to them, so you can't sit and you can't crouch when you want to. If you learn to adjust them to a correct angle, I'm sure they won't be much of a hassle." Her words did make sense.

Currently, it was as if Lin Sanjiu's pair of skeletal wings had been tied up by an invisible rope. As their owner didn't know what to do with them, they were almost always retracted behind Lin Sanjiu's back. At first glance, they neither looked like they were part of Lin Sanjiu body nor did they appear movable. Instead, they were more like costume wings. That was also the reason why very few people on the street even gave her a second look. After all, in the Twelve Worlds Centrum, there were many people whose outfits were weirder.

After dragging her large wings around, walking for more than ten minutes, Lin Sanjiu nearly missed the entrance to the shopping street. This was mainly because she had never seen buildings within an area designed in such a haphazard way.

In her impression, shopping streets were usually rows of terrace buildings with adjacent shops lining the streets. Lin Sanjiu didn't know if this particular shopping street was specifically designed to attract customers but she would simply classify the whole design as a complete mess.

The entrance of a shop that was just a few steps away from Lin Sanjiu wasn't facing the main street but was rather at a slanting angle. She could see from a distance that there was a "Special Item" signboard. However, she didn't go in because that particular building wasn't even a proper shop. Someone had just created that small space by stacking some bricks together and the height of the door was only up to Lin Sanjiu's shoulders. She could bend over and enter the 'store' but she would have to rip off her wings as well.

She saw a similarly random building not far from that store

which was basically a giant, overturned, metal bucket. She didn't know how the owners even found that thing. The metal bucket was two stories high and apparently, someone had cut out an entrance. There was a sign above the entrance "Munition Factory Exclusive: Private sales and Surplus Samples". Lin Sanjiu saw a few people heading inside. Interestingly, they would accidentally hit the walls of the metal bucket, no matter how careful they were, and it would cause the whole building to sway once or twice.

Behind that metal bucket, there was a beautiful ornate building that stretched to near the end of a street. It had an ancient oriental architecture that was so tall that it reached the clouds. Before Lin Sanjiu could process her awe, she suddenly realized that something was wrong. On closer examination, she realized that the building was not so tall that it reached the clouds, but rather the rooftop of the building came with its own clouds as if to create the false impression that it was a tall building.

Other than the common stalls which sold maps and street snacks, many posthumans just placed a cloth on the ground and started selling their items. Lin Sanjiu browsed around, pretending like she had a lot of money in her pockets. She discovered that both the pricing and the types of items were decided very arbitrarily. However, she noticed one extra detail. Most sellers would place the survivor supplies or weapons like handguns and military knives that they had on the ground. However, when it came to Special Items, none of these makeshift stalls would just lay them out. Instead, they would place a sort of standardized paper to show the item that they were selling.

When Lin Sanjiu looked down, she saw that the paper in front of her had the words: "Special Item #572012623 - Appraisal Certificate".

"Are you interested?" the stall owner smiled when he noticed a potential customer, "Go ahead and look at that certificate! I just got the item appraised yesterday. The appraiser even mentioned that

he rarely sees items of this quality!"

"Why... why do you have to get your Special Item appraised?" Lin Sanjiu scanned the content of the paper.

The paper provided information about the item's name, item's description, safety warning, additional notes, and instructions. There was also an estimated value of the item at the bottom. The particular appraisal certificate was for an item called [Peach Blossom Fan]. It was valued at about 42 large crystals.

"You are looking for unappraised items?" the stall owner's expression changed slightly and he took the certificate from Lin Sanjiu, "Then, you shouldn't be here... Just a word of advice, it's best not to try to get a cheap bargain, the risks are too high..."

Lin Sanjiu was confused by his words but she at least understood one thing. If she wanted to sell any Special Items here, she would need to have her Special Item professionally appraised before anyone would be willing to buy it.

It wasn't difficult to find a professional appraisal agency. Such businesses practically required only a single licensed appraiser. She found out that there were a couple of these agencies in that particular "pseudo highrise" building.

After she got more information from that half-hearted stall owner who was just answering her superficially, Lin Sanjiu sprinted to the "pseudo highrise" building.

Now that she had decided on what she had to do, she felt a little more relaxed. She took out her "sepia yellow" steamed bun and took a bite...

"Oh, isn't this a meat bun?"

Chapter 293: It Isn't Easy For Outsiders

"Special Item Appraisal Fee: 4 Big Crystals."

The few appraisal agencies she found all had a sign with the same words hanging at their entrance. This unfortunate discovery instantly made Lin Sanjiu feel like a loser. She stood at the outside of one of the appraisal agencies with a helpless expression as she watched other posthumans walking in and out of the store. They looked at ease, so it was obvious that none of them thought much of the 4 big crystal fee. As people walked past and saw her standing outside foolishly, they would show a bit of empathy. Apparently, she wasn't the first person from outside the Twelve Worlds Centrum that did not have the money to appraise her item.

"How do the other newcomers manage?" Just as this thought surfaced in Lin Sanjiu's mind, the glass door of the appraisal agency beside her suddenly opened. The glass used was very special. Looking through the glass, a person could see everything, except humans. When she first saw a flower vase floating in the air, she nearly thought that she was seeing a duoluo zhong.

This time, a young man opened the door. She seemed to have seen him at the entrance once. His body was behind the door so it looked as if his head was floating in midair. The man observed Lin Sanjiu from head to toe before asking, "Are you new here? You don't have any money?"

Lin Sanjiu nodded.

"Our agency requires an upfront appraisal fee," the man frowned. "It's no use waiting here. I can tell you another method but you will be on the losing end."

Lin Sanjiu's eyes lit up.

"There are some private appraisers who target business from newcomers like you. They'll appraise your item for free but you

will have to sell your items in their stores. After the item is sold, they would take a percentage of the sale," the man seemed convinced that Lin Sanjiu was affecting his business by standing outside his store with her two large skeletal wings so he gave her very precise instructions, "Go to B2 of this building. You will find a shop assistant trying to get customers. You can just follow him."

This information was a life-saver. Lin Sanjiu couldn't care less what percentage of the sale the people would collect. She thanked the man hurriedly and went to basement 2 of the building.

The shops in the basements weren't beautiful and clean like those on the upper floor. As she went down further, the shops became smaller and the people seemed shadier. When she reached B2, she found it chaotic. People were just everywhere, the stalls were disorganized and it was smoky. After observing for some time, Lin Sanjiu found the people here very interesting. Since this place was very crowded, it was inevitable that people would accidentally bump into each other. A bald bloke with a white dog-like creature on his shoulder accidentally bumped into a little girl in red. Two of them stopped and they didn't speak for a moment. They observed each other for a few seconds and it was as if they were judging who among them was stronger. Shortly after, the bald bloke bowed and apologized softly, "I'm sorry." Then, the two people went their own separate paths.

Lin Sanjiu found a corner and stood there. She looked rather conspicuous because of her height and her wings. After a few minutes, just as what the man upstairs described, a skinny man, who seemed rather young, walked over after seeing her.

Lin Sanjiu could tell that he was very weak from just one glance. He probably didn't have much experience outside the Twelve Worlds Centrum.

"Sis, would you like to appraise your Special Items? We'll cover everything. You just have to wait and get your money!" The young shop assistant started a conversation with her, smiling.

"Where's your shop?" Lin Sanjiu gave him a cold expression and tried to act as if she had lots of experience.

"It isn't far. It's just ahead!" the shop assistant replied even more enthusiastically once he knew he had a potential customer.

"Lead the way," Lin Sanjiu said mildly. She was hiding her excitement.

The shop assistant agreed and brought her further and further away. It was apparent to Lin Sanjiu that the young chap was very familiar with this place. After many twist and turns, they walked out from a back door. Then, he walked confidently through a few different small alleys. "We are reaching soon. It is just in front," he assured many times. After more than ten minutes, Lin Sanjiu finally saw a shop.

It was worse than those shady and dimly-lit Special Item recycling shops.

Lin Sanjiu nearly damaged the small and narrow doorway with her skeletal wings. She scrunched her body. Without anyone teaching, Lin Sanjiu squished her wings downward and stretched them lengthwise behind her. With much effort, she finally managed to squeeze through the doorway and entered the courtyard.

"You can just sit here and wait for a while. I will go call my master." The shop assistant led Lin Sanjiu to the guest hall. As he spoke, he poured a cup of tea for her. Lin Sanjiu looked into the cup. The tea was bright red and there were a few pieces of solid dregs. She questioned the shop assistant casually about the tea. He quickly explained that the tea was made from something derived from the Red Nautilus shells. Lin Sanjiu could smell a meaty fragrance from the tea.

Lin Sanjiu held the cup for two seconds and decided to put the tea down.

It felt as if the young shop assistant had only disappeared for a second when his master opened a door from another room and entered the guest hall. His master's face was covered with wrinkles and knife scars. He was a middle-aged man with a bit of bright red hair. Once that man wearing a robe with the word "Appraiser" entered the guest hall, he stared at Lin Sanjiu with his large bulging eyes and asked loudly, "You are the person who wants her item appraised?"

If Lin Sanjiu wasn't as confident about her combat abilities, any other person might just run away after being scared by that man like that.

"Okay. Following the usual rules, give me your item and you can wait here," the voice of the red-haired appraiser seemed to be naturally loud. The man stretched out his large palms, "You will get the results after two hours! After we sell the Special Item, I want 20%!"

Lin Sanjiu immediately felt hesitant.

This place was too suspicious. She did feel somewhat uneasy that the man would disappear from her sight with her item. After contemplating, she tried to her best to appear calm as she asked, "Can I follow and watch you?"

"Of course not! It's our rule!" the appraiser answered rather agitatedly as if he had heard such questions many times before. He waved his hand dismissively and assured, "Come on. You are sitting in my house. Are you worried that I will go somewhere?"

"This is this man's house?" Lin Sanjiu was slightly stunned. She couldn't help glancing outside the window. Even though it is rather dark outside because of all the skyscrapers, she could see a clothesline in a corner outside. There were still a few pieces of men clothes on the clothesline. She didn't know why, but this simple everyday detail immediately convinced her.

"Okay. I want to appraise this book," Lin Sanjiu said as she

thought about the phrase, "never doubt the person you hire, never hire the person you doubt". She clenched her teeth and took out [A Girl's Sorrow] decisively. "Ah, after the appraiser..."

"We always have customers," the red-haired appraiser took the book from her impatiently, "When we have new goods, we would just inform them. Items get sold in just a few days. Anyway, the item will be with you. No matter how much the customer offers you, you will give 20% to me. Understand?"

Lin Sanjiu felt slightly assured. The appraiser seemed to be an impatient man. Before he finished his sentence, he had already entered another room. Lin Sanjiu sat in her seat without doing anything. She took a sip of that Red Nautilus tea as if trying to relieve her awkward unease.

Two hours passed very quickly.

However, no one returned.

Chapter 294: This Sack Of Flesh

After waiting a while more, Lin Sanjiu finally felt somewhat edgy. She walked over to the door where the appraiser entered.

A breeze from some unknown source was blowing through the gap of the door into the guest hall. She felt the cool wind against her bare legs. Thud. Thud. She heard two sounds coming from a distance, she composed herself and shouted, "Mister Appraiser! Have you finished appraising my item?"

Unfortunately, she couldn't hear any sound from behind the door.

"I've been cheated?" Lin Sanjiu thought to herself, frowning. She pulled open the door immediately without caring about whatever rules were involved.

Surprisingly, there wasn't a room behind the door.

She found a dimly-lit corridor covered by a bamboo mat. There were two dull lights hanging from the ceiling. The breeze from an unknown source caused them to sway creating an interplay of shadows and light. The corridor seemed strangely silent. Lin Sanjiu left the guest hall and entered the corridor cautiously.

The design of the house was very confusing, it seemed to be constructed by someone who had no idea about construction. The guest hall was only joined to the rest of the house with that single corridor, like a lantern hanging from a stick. There weren't any other rooms along that single corridor. The only door she saw was at the end of the corridor. Furthermore, in contrast to the ceiling of the guest hall, the ceiling of the corridor was much lower. Lin Sanjiu had no choice but to squeeze her wings to its lowest position and stretched it out behind her. That was the only way she could move in the corridor.

The door at the end of the corridor swung on its hinge as the

wind blew, making noises as it hit the doorframe. Lin Sanjiu finally discovered the source of that sound she heard in the guest hall. She walked swiftly to the room at the end of the corridor and stopped suddenly. She quickly used her higher consciousness and scanned the room.

Even though the effectiveness of her ability was affected by the amount of light available and she couldn't see through objects, just like normal eyes, she could use her ability to see much further. On top of that, she could also use her ability to check around corners.

From the ajar door, Lin Sanjiu could see a room with tatami flooring. It was very quiet and there wasn't anyone around. She quickly entered the room and closed the door. She couldn't exactly put a finger on it, but she felt that the room was a little strange. At least, that was Lin Sanjiu's first impression of the room.

There was a patch of old-looking brown stain on the floor. At the corner of the room, there were a few empty cardboard boxes. On the left side of the room, there was a large closet. There was an open window directly in front of the door and a cold wind was blowing through. The wind had messed up a small stack of white paper. When Lin Sanjiu grabbed and looked at one of those paper, she was a little shocked. It was an appraisal certificate of a Special Item called [Hengjiang Manufacturing Pte Ltd]. Scanning the paper quickly, she found out that the appraiser's name was "Redhead Ol' Jack".

Lin Sanjiu immediately thought of the impatient, middle-aged man with bright red hair that she had only met once. Apparently, the man was a real appraiser. Lin Sanjiu looked through the few certificates on the ground which were all of the same size. The names of the items appraised were different but they were all appraised by "Redhead Ol' Jack".

After the Special Item had been appraised, the original owner could take back the Special Item, however, the condition for this sort of arrangement was that the certificate would be kept by the

appraiser and their agency would find a buyer. Lin Sanjiu understood this from the shop assistant so she wasn't surprised that Redhead Ol' Jack had that many appraisal certificates with him, but...

"If the appraiser isn't a swindler, then, I'm trespassing?" Lin Sanjiu suddenly felt a little ashamed. She quickly re-organized the certificates and called out loudly, "Mister Appraiser, are you around?"

Lin Sanjiu prepared herself for a reprimanding from the irascible appraiser as she called out for him. However, no one responded to her. She walked through the corridor once more and found that there weren't any other room. That is to say, the appraiser and the shop assistant took her [A Girl's Sorrow] book and just disappeared into this room.

"That's strange!" Lin Sanjiu pushed open the door to the room. Unable to figure out what had happened, she felt somewhat irritated, "Is that book some sort of amazing object? Did he see it and just abandoned his den? Aren't all these appraisal certificates equivalent to cash?!"

"Logically speaking, that is not true," Mrs. Manas answered her. "Items from the same place should be about the same quality. All the other books do not possess extraordinary, game-changing effects."

The cold wind blew through the window intermittently. The cool breeze helped Lin Sanjiu clear her mind a little. She frowned and thought through the situation. She circled the room and looked at the various limited furniture in the room once more.

She noticed the large closet rather unintentionally. Suddenly, she thought of something and quickly walked to it. She immediately opened the door of the closet.

Redhead Ol' Jack was sitting quietly in the closet. Lin Sanjiu found herself staring straight into his eyes. Lin Sanjiu nearly let

out a gasp as she staggered two steps backward. It was then that she discovered that Redhead Ol' Jack was no longer alive.

Two hours before, that man with a head of fiery hair was still energetic and full of life. Right now, he was just leaning silently against the closet wall like a lifeless puppet. His pair of eyes framed by his wrinkly, scarred face was still opened wide.

Lin Sanjiu stared at the corpse and slowly approached it. She tugged him—

Just then, Redhead Ol' Jack's corpse fell out of the closet like a deflated ball. It was just a gentle tug. The man's limbs tumbled out and fell to the ground with a soft thud. Lin Sanjiu had a nagging feeling that the man's limbs were very unusual. When she took a closer look, she felt her head go numb.

There was a very long incision at the back of his body. That incision stretched from the back of the man's head all the way to her lower waist. When she peeled open the incision, she found that the man's body was empty. Other than some dried up blood vessels and some remaining flesh, the man's bones and organs were missing. They had been "cleaned out". With the exception of his head, which was still intact, his body was a literal sack of flesh.

From the looks of it, it was as if his insides had been eaten.

"Was he killed just now?" Lin Sanjiu mumbled to herself in shock, "I didn't hear anyone screaming for help..."

The corpse was still wearing the robe with the word "Appraiser". The stain on the floor was still in the same spot. After thinking for some time, she pulled open the robe and discovered that the man's waist was already covered with livor mortis. Standing closer to the body, she could now detect a stench from it.

"He must have died four to five hours ago," Mrs. Manas said with certainty.

Lin Sanjiu was stunned. If that was the case, who did she see just

now?

Chapter 295: The Matter Regarding Work

"The way he was murdered is a little weird," Lin Sanjiu suppressed the chill in her heart as she continued staring at the body, or rather the term "human pouch" would be more suitable. "Killing is just killing. Why did the murderer waste time doing something so unnecessary?"

Mrs. Manas wasn't able to answer Lin Sanjiu's question either.

"Since he is dead and his innards have all been removed, what did we see just now?" Lin Sanjiu couldn't make sense of the situation and shook her head, "When he took the book from me, I could feel the strength from his fingers. His body didn't seem like an empty shell."

"An empty shell."

That phrase somehow lingered in Lin Sanjiu's mind for a few seconds while a vague thought formed in her mind. However, that feeling disappeared in a flash and Lin Sanjiu found herself as confounded as before.

"Maybe, someone with a shapeshifting ability knew that he was dead. So, they pretended to be the appraiser so that they could cheat people of their items?" The more Mrs. Manas tried to analyze the situation, the more she felt that it was hopeless. She sighed, "I think we can't get that book back."

When Lin Sanjiu thought about the book she lost and the fact that she had no money with her, she felt so stifled for a moment that she wasn't as bothered with the mystery of that "human pouch".

"But, that shop assistant clearly left in front of us, but how did the fake appraiser leave? There is only a single entrance, so the person would have to walk past the guest hall..."

When she said this, Lin Sanjiu suddenly hit her own forehead,

"Ah!" Then, she ran to the window. The window wasn't big but it had a wire grate so Lin Sanjiu overlooked it. As expected, when she pulled the wire grate, it came off easily. She threw it aside and peered her head out of the window to look outside.

Both Mrs. Manas and herself were dumbfounded when she saw what was outside. Now, she knew why there was a constant wind and why there was even a window grate...

There was a deep ravine right outside the window. She couldn't even see the bottom of that ravine.

Sticking her head out, she could see that the house was built right over a ravine. As she lowered her gaze following the steep precipice, it only led into a dark abyss with a bit of dark mist. Looking left and right, she realized that this house wasn't the only property that was built over this ravine. There were quite a few neighboring houses with similar windows facing the ravine. One of the people living in these houses even hung their clothes outside their window.

From the looks of it, these residents did not seem to mind that a ravine was right outside their house. It was as if it was something very normal.

"This..." Lin Sanjiu stammered as she stared at the black abyss. The ravine seemed like it could house some sort of large monster. Still unable to believe what she was seeing, she examined the ravine a little closer and finally discovered a vague clue.

Apparently, the houses were built before the ravine appeared.

She made this inference after she noticed some ruins, made of broken bricks and stones, on the other side of the ravine. Lin Sanjiu observed the ruins carefully for some time. Finally, within the ruins, she noticed a high-rise building which had been cut right in the middle. Half of its structure had been crushed. The other half which remained had been eroded by the wind over the years and had long lost its original facade.

"As far as I can tell, the building had been cleaved in the middle... along with the ground below it?" she mumbled to herself.

The people were probably unprepared for this horrifying attack. Lin Sanjiu figured that this must be created from the battle with the invading Red Nautilus. Many years after the battle, the people rebuilt new cities from the ruins and developed new technologies. They had put their past so well behind them that even these people living over a ravine had already treated it as just a normal part of life.

Despite discovering something surprising, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling that there was no way she could get her book back. If the person who pretended to be the appraiser was prepared to climb down such a steep precipice to escape, he would definitely plan an escape route that would make it impossible for Lin Sanjiu to find him.

Heaving a long sigh, Lin Sanjiu zoned out for a bit. The appraiser's death was just too strange. "Perhaps, this unique method of operation could be a clue in the future."

When Lin Sanjiu thought of this, she converted the corpse into a card and kept it in her deck, even though she was somewhat reluctant.

"Although it is a little late this time around, don't you always have to collect a dead body on the first day that you arrive in a new world?" Mrs. Manas didn't know whether to laugh or cry, "I wonder what sort of curse this is?"

"Gaining one corpse and losing a Special Item? This transaction isn't that worthwhile," Lin Sanjiu smiled bitterly.

A single Special Item wasn't really that a big deal to Lin Sanjiu. After she recovered her card deck, she had access to all her other Special Items. Even if she lost this, she had many other items. However, she was more bothered by the fact that she didn't know what to do now that her first attempt to get her item appraised had

failed.

"If we think about it carefully, it is quite odd," Mrs. Manas said suddenly. "If that person killed this appraiser, he could only cheat that one book from you. Isn't this operation a little too costly? If he wanted to do this again, how could he be sure that the victim, you, wouldn't be waiting here for him?"

"Who knows? Maybe, his method of operation is to strike once and change locations?" Lin Sanjiu replied moodily.

"If that is the case, do you think that the shop assistant is an accomplice?" Mrs. Manas asked. Lin Sanjiu thought about it but she couldn't be sure. She was just trying her luck when she went back to that basement. Quite predictably, after waiting in the same spot for some time, the skinny chap didn't reappear.

"Alright, I blame this on my bad luck," she grimaced again. "How should I earn some money right now?"

She was actually talking to Mrs. Manas but, perhaps due to her bad mood, she didn't notice that she had blurted it out. As her voice faded, a person who had just walked past her suddenly stopped. His hooves stopped as he looked at Lin Sanjiu from head to toe. For some reasons, this man had goat legs instead of normal human legs.

Lin Sanjiu noticed his gaze and sized him up quickly. Unfortunately, the person's upper body was covered by a hooded cape. She could only tell that the person was a male.

"Do you need money?" the faun asked with a deep voice. It was as if his vocal cords had been flattened by a train before.

"I have a job. Are you interested?"

Chapter 296: Time For Another Battle

After traversing across various slopes of differing heights lined with tall buildings, Lin Sanjiu walked into a narrow, meandering alley. Suddenly, the pedestrians on the road, along with the shops along the streets, disappeared with a blink of an eye like melting snowflakes.

The bustling scene of seasonless city life filled with a seemingly endless amount of curiosities and human activities gradually faded to the background. With fewer people around, the surrounding noise died down and it became quiet. At the cusp of dawn, Lin Sanjiu could only hear the crisp "clip-clop" sounds as the faun trotted through the misty morn.

"How much further is it?"

Lin Sanjiu couldn't help asking after they had walked for some time. At the same time, her eyes drifted and paused for a moment on the faun's back. There was a cloth-printed picture of a smiling mermaid with open arms on the faun's hooded cape.

"Just another five minutes," the faun replied. His reply was somewhat muffled because of his cape. "You are nearing the border of our base."

That was actually the longest consecutive line of words Lin Sanjiu heard the faun say. "Our" naturally referred to the "Smiling Mermaid", which was the most influential faction in the Cyber District.

Previously, when she asked the map store owner about the most influential faction in the district, he reacted as if he was guarding a grave secret. Remembering this, Lin Sanjiu couldn't help feeling a little worried.

However, Lin Sanjiu kept quiet and followed the faun without

voicing her opinions, as if a chosen freelancer who didn't have the right to question the head contractor. As they walked, Lin Sanjiu started thinking about the possible risks involved with this "job".

When she first asked the faun about what the job entailed, she did not expect that he would answer her directly. "We are entering a pocket dimension, are you up for it?"

"Entering a pocket dimension? But why?"

This immediately stirred her curiosity. Unfortunately, even after following the faun for some time, Lin Sanjiu could not get the answer to her question. The faun seemed to be a man of few words. Throughout the journey, the faun replied to her with the same few words no matter how hard she tried to question him. If he had not revealed earlier, while they were in the basement, that the reward for the job was 80 big crystals, Lin Sanjiu probably wouldn't even follow him.

Considering her current capabilities, she didn't have much to fear. Tempted by the reward of that many crystals, she immediately agreed to follow the faun.

As the two people walked farther, the symbol of the smiling mermaid became more and more common. It was on the walls of buildings, on street corners and on various signs—signaling to Lin Sanjiu that she was reaching the depths of the faction's territory. When Lin Sanjiu noticed a guard tower from a distance and the black walls surrounding the tower, the faun turned around sharply and brought Lin Sanjiu in the opposite direction.

"Where are we going now?"

"Old Goat, here!"

Before Lin Sanjiu could ask the faun her question, a voice suddenly rang out from the murky silence. Shocked, Lin Sanjiu looked up and noticed a head peeking from the left corner of the

street. "Yo, you found a person this time?"

Lin Sanjiu was surprised to see someone whose appearance was even weirder than the faun's.

The faun gestured for her to continue following him and replied the other person with a casual "yeah", without expressing any surprise.

"Say, that personality of yours... One is better than none. That's an improvement," the other person sighed and immediately turned to Lin Sanjiu. He observed her and nodded, "Considering her height and that aggressive look, she should be alright. But that pair of wings is really strange!"

"..."

Even though having two skeletal wings on her back wasn't anything normal, Lin Sanjiu couldn't really accept being criticised in such a manner by the person before her.

The outfit of that person could be considered normal but he or she was wearing a blue and white porcelain vase on the face. As half of the person's face was covered by the round base of the vase, Lin Sanjiu could only see the person's eyes under the messy black hair. On top of that, the person's voice had a strange frequency and buzzed within the interior of the vase. As a result, Lin Sanjiu could not figure out the gender of that person even after staring for a long time.

From her observation, the porcelain vase did not even interfere with the person's movement one bit. He turned around and brought Lin Sanjiu and the faun into a small path. After following the winding path, somehow, they reached a piece of vast vacant land.

There were already five people waiting there. They all looked different and were wearing different outfits. Markedly, none of

them had a Smiling Mermaid symbol on and none of them had the strange fashion sense that inflicted the residents of the Twelve Worlds Centrum. They were probably selected freelancers just like Lin Sanjiu.

"Oh, just one question," Lin Sanjiu chased up with Porcelain Vase and asked, "Why are we entering a pocket dimension?"

Porcelain Vase's black eyes widened as his eyes swept across both the faun and Lin Sanjiu, "You don't know anything? You don't know anything and you just followed him? Hey, Old Goat, didn't you tell her anything?"

After being stared by Porcelain Vase, the faun raised his hand and scratched the back of his head in a rather obvious manner. Lin Sanjiu finally realized that he might be embarrassed.

"Nevermind... Come with me. You will know in a minute," Porcelain Vase let out a long sigh and brought Lin Sanjiu to the open space before them.

After waiting for some time, a few Smiling Mermaid members appeared bringing other people with them. Lin Sanjiu quietly counted the number of people standing with her in this open space and found out that there were already close to forty people. Seeing that they had a sizable number of people, Porcelain Vase walked in front of everyone and shouted out to the various small clusters of posthumans, "Welcome everybody!"

Everyone turned their attention to him immediately.

"I think everyone is clear why we gathered you here today," as he said this, Porcelain Vase threw a glance at Lin Sanjiu and continued, "There are three different types of pocket dimension with different rules within the Smiling Mermaid territory. One of them is very unstable and is currently still in an evolutionary state. Its size and scope have been constantly changing and our goal today is to enter that particular pocket dimension."

"Our aim, this time, isn't only to survey the boundaries of the pocket dimension and how it affects people. We need to record the rules and the events within the pocket dimension. As it is currently in a rapid evolutionary state, we need to gather the detailed information about it to prevent unnecessary accidents."

"I think some of you already know the rules, but let me go over it once more. There are 36 people here on our grounds. After a one-on-one knockout battle, we will filter out half the number. The remaining 18 people will have to face five consecutive fights with members of our organization. Anyone who can last for five rounds can then rest and enter the pocket dimension.

"You can keep any rewards you receive in the pocket dimension. After you provide us with information about the pocket dimension, our organization will reward you with another 80 big crystals."

"If anyone wishes to back out now, please inform us—no one? Alright, please make your preparations and the elimination round will begin in a bit!"

Chapter 297: Oh, The Smell Of Your Body...

"Boom!" with a deep muffled rumble, the ground shook violently for a short second. A Smiling Mermaid member fell heavily to the ground after a black shadow flung him into the air. The man who had landed on the ground was large and stout. It took him a long time to catch his breath due to his own weight. He gestured away a person who had stepped forward to help him and climbed up from the ground himself with some effort.

When he stood up, it was as if a small hill had emerged from the horizon. The stout man eyed the silhouette of his opponent who stood not far from him. He suddenly wiped his face and laughed at himself self-deprecatingly, "You can't judge a book by its cover. Who would've guessed this little lady is this strong. Alright, you have passed this round."

After she withdrew her fists, the coldness on Lin Sanjiu's face faded as she flashed him a calm smile.

Compared to the man who had a figure of a small hill, Lin Sanjiu's 1.87m frame was like a short bamboo pole with stick-like limbs. However, her svelte frame generated an incredible amount of strength in a split second and she instantly became the first posthuman to pass the third round.

Lin Sanjiu didn't even break a sweat. During that burst of attack which lasted less than a minute, she engaged her enemy, change her tactics and fought single-handedly. She didn't even need to use 30% of her strength, so the fight was almost effortless for her. She didn't even open up the wings on her back. Seeing the fat man readily accepting his defeat with ease, she smiled and replied modestly, "Well, because you went easy on me."

Knowing that she was being polite, the stout man nodded and stood to one side.

Predictably, Lin Sanjiu won the first one-on-one knockout battle.

She had also promptly defeated three Smiling Mermaid members. Aside from the second fight, where she decided to try and familiarize herself with the use of her wings in battle, the other fights all lasted less than a minute.

Before she could utter "who's next", Porcelain Vase ran toward her.

"A few more people have arrived wanting to join in the pocket dimension mission so we are understaffed right now," Porcelain Vase's complained with a buzzing voice. "I think your combat skills are good enough, we don't need to test you further—"

When Lin Sanjiu heard this, she thought that she could just rest and wait to enter the pocket dimension. Unexpectedly, Porcelain Vase had not finished his sentence, "so why don't you represent us and fight two rounds with them? Don't worry. Even if you lose, you will still retain your right to enter the pocket dimension, considering your capabilities."

Apparently, exploration of the said pocket dimension wasn't something that was particularly important to Smiling Mermaid since the people in charge of the mission could just change the rules on a whim. Even though that request wasn't raised by her prospective "employer", Lin Sanjiu was usually easy-going regarding such matters. Besides, the person who made that request was Porcelain Vase, so she agreed on the spot.

"That's fantastic. Do you see that girl over there?"

Porcelain Vase raised his hand and pointed behind Lin Sanjiu. A girl who was wearing a plaid-patterned scarf stood at the spot that he was pointing to.

Red Nautilus had a rather pleasant climate which wasn't too warm or too cold. As the temperature was constantly around 20-over degrees, people used to wear all sorts of outfits. The girl was a classic example. She wore a short tight, neon-yellow, cropped short-sleeved top and a pair of sports shorts. She left most of her

legs and upper chest exposed yet she wore a huge, thick, plaid-patterned woolen scarf.

Even though the color of the girl's full outfit was poorly coordinated, it was far from strange considering the fashion sense in the Twelve Worlds Centrum.

After a short introduction by Porcelain Vase, Plaid Scarf Girl seemed rather high spirited. "Big Sister, please go easy on me!" she said while she eyed Lin Sanjiu with her eyes that seemed excessively black. "I saw your previous fight. You're very powerful!"

Lin Sanjiu acknowledged her and was about to ask Porcelain Vase when they could start and found that he was missing when she turned around.

"Is this your fifth round?" Lin Sanjiu asked out of courtesy and tried not to look into the girl's eyes, "Then, we should start as soon as possible."

Somehow, the girl's pupils were significantly larger than those of any normal person. It was like a large black patch within her pitiful lacking sclera and it seemed like it could disperse any second. It was a little uncomfortable looking at that pair of eyes.

"Okay," she crooked her head as a weird smile appeared on her face. Her light green dyed hair fell to one side of her face making the color-coordination of her whole appearance even more confusing, "Call me Sajee. Your guidance is appreciated."

Being polite, Lin Sanjiu wanted to introduce herself as Jiu but before she could even pronounce "J-", the person in front of her blurred and lunged directly at her. As they were talking to each before, they were standing very close to each other. Lin Sanjiu did not have enough time to dodge the attack. Sajee's bent elbow was already in front of her abdomen and it was about to make contact

Lin Sanjiu had used this attack on an opponent just five minutes ago. She had less than half a second to react, she had no choice but to tank the attack directly. With a single thought, she activated her [Defence Forcefield]. A faint white light flashed and her opponent's fist landed on her lower abdomen.

After recovering her physical body, Lin Sanjiu's body naturally wasn't as hard as diamond, unlike her higher consciousness form. However, with her current physical resilience and her [Defence Forcefield], Sajee's fist only hurt a little. Lin Sanjiu did not even move half a step.

"Big Sister, you are so powerful." Sajee immediately smiled showing her set of white teeth. "This is certainly your move, and it doesn't work on you!"

The friendly expression on Lin Sanjiu's face just moments ago had long faded.

"Well, then use your true strength," she said indifferently. Every fiber of muscle in her body seemed charged by that punch. It was as if she was given a jolt. She quickly felt a thirst for battle coursing through her blood.

Beyond anything Lin Sanjiu could anticipate, Sajee suddenly bounced once on the spot as if she was overjoyed. The skin on the girl's upper chest quivered as she said, "No! I know I can't win against Big Sister... I admit defeat!"

Lin Sanjiu was stunned. There was a sort of disappointment like she was punching air. In an instant, she found no way of venting that fighting spirit which had just been evoked. Since her opponent had already conceded defeat, she couldn't say anything more. It took a while for her to react as she watched as the girl strode off toward Porcelain Vase.

"Hey," Mrs. Manas suddenly spoke after the girl walked some distance away. Oddly, Mrs. Manas was whispering. "Do you think that girl is a little perverted?"

"Huh?" Lin Sanjiu was a little dumbfounded.

"You were concentrating on defending yourself so you didn't notice," Mrs. Manas sounded a little weird, "but I did. Wasn't her face near your shoulders just now? When she punched you, she took a deep whiff of your body, around your shoulder area."

Lin Sanjiu's scalp felt a little numb. Just when she was about to ask Mrs. Manas if she had made a mistake, she heard Sajee's calling her joyfully, "Big Sister!"

She turned around and saw a pair of tar-black eyes staring back at her. The girl shouted delightedly, "They say I'm strong enough, so I can enter the pocket dimension with you!"

Chapter 298: Entering the Pocket Dimension

Within the Smiling Mermaid's territory, there was a piece of land which stretched over several square kilometers. There were no residents living there and there weren't even any buildings. When the wind bellowed, the wild grasses would sway, revealing the broken stones and ruins they hid.

"After discovering an unstable pocket dimension here, we demolished all the buildings around it when the boundary of the pocket dimension receded," Porcelain Vase's voice buzzed within his accessory. After their elimination process, he had brought the final five posthumans to this piece of land. "If we didn't demolish them and the pocket dimension continued expanding, who knows how those building would integrate with the pocket dimension and the additional complexity they would bring?"

Despite his words, leaving the land empty certainly couldn't guarantee anyone's safety.

"Can you see that yellow warning sign in the distance?" Porcelain Vase pointed to a spot not far from them. Lin Sanjiu narrowed her eyes and spotted a faint yellow sign several kilometers away. As there was nothing blocking her view, it was quite visible.

"That marks the boundary of the pocket dimension after the last mission," Porcelain Vase cast a sweeping glance at the six people before him. "One of your tasks is to find the new boundary of the pocket dimension and move the sign there."

The five posthumans looked at the warning sign simultaneously. No one responded for a while. Porcelain Vase suddenly laughed and pushed the faun forward. "Old Goat will be in charge of bringing you guys into the pocket dimension. He will brief you on all the other tasks. But, let me be very frank, if you do not complete all the tasks assigned, we will deduct the reward at the end."

Lin Sanjiu did wonder how the Smiling Mermaid members would even know if they completed the mission shoddily. Now, she got her answer. Even though the faun did not fight just now, by the looks of things, his combat abilities must be of a certain level.

After briefing the team, Porcelain Vase pulled the faun aside and spoke to him quietly. After that, he bid farewell to the freelancers and left. Somehow, once he left, the five posthumans started to size each other up.

Sajee was the first to jump beside Lin Sanjiu.

"Big Sister, let me follow you." Without knowing Lin Sanjiu's name, Sajee acted as if she was very close with Lin Sanjiu. She looked over at Lin Sanjiu with her pupils which seemed on the verge of dilating into nothingness, "Let's stick together—us girls."

Sometimes, the way she phrased her words was a little weird.

However, it was a fact that they were the only two women on the team—perhaps because women didn't usually follow random strangers. The remaining posthumans on the team were all male. One of them was an older man whose skin was dull red. He was wearing a feathered warbonnet. He was half naked and only wore only a grass skirt. His outfit seemed to mimic that of a Paleoindian. The next person looked even weirder. Half his body was clearly human and the other half had already become old tree barks. Supposedly, during the apocalypse in his world, he was just about to become a duoluozhong when he evolved. As a result, he retained his current appearance. The last young man looked the most normal among the whole group, even compared to Lin Sanjiu.

"Are you all ready?" Faun looked around while his head was still well-hidden in his hood. None of them could see his face and no one knew how he could keep his face hidden while looking at the outside world. "Let's go."

After he said that, he took one step toward the direction of the yellow sign. His hoof landed soundlessly on a patch of wild grass.

The ragtag team of posthumans did not know each other beforehand so they were still unfamiliar with each other. After Faun, who had unwittingly taken the team leader role, finished his sentence, the remaining posthumans followed him without saying a word—with the exception of Sajee, that skipped along speaking to Lin Sanjiu and trying to hold her hand.

Even though Lin Sanjiu was even-tempered when she wasn't in any sort of conflict, she didn't hold any qualms rejecting others. "We'll walk separately," she said blandly as she pulled her arm back and extended her pair of skeletal wings a little.

Her white skeletal wings extended swiftly and silently. Lin Sanjiu adjusted the angle of the spines on her wings such that the sharp ends were pointing outward. The sharp spines created a barrier between Lin Sanjiu and Sajee.

Sajee did not seem to mind Lin Sanjiu's action. Her pair of eyes which seemed constantly on the verge of turning fully black landed on the spines on Lin Sanjiu's wings. Sajee's smile did not change even one bit, as if it was a natural part of her face.

"Big Sister," even though she couldn't hold Lin Sanjiu's hand, she did not give up trying to walk as close to Lin Sanjiu as possible. After what Mrs. Manas told her before, Lin Sanjiu could clearly hear that Sajee was inhaling very deeply between her words.

"Don't you think it is a little weird?" Sajee asked.

Lin Sanjiu threw a glance at the pair of black lusterless eyes staring at her through her white skeletal wings guarding her shoulders.

As though she had received Lin Sanjiu's encouragement, Sajee immediately chirped excited, "It's like this. Smiling Mermaid has more than enough members. Why don't they get their own members to enter this pocket dimension? Isn't that more reliable?"

Lin Sanjiu frowned a little but she didn't think much about it.

Since this particular pocket dimension was unstable, that also implied that the risks were unpredictable. With so little known about it, naturally, the sensible thing to do was just to get some unimportant people to scout for more information first. Besides, although getting information about a pocket dimension was important, fundamentally, it was only of more significance in an unfamiliar apocalyptic world. Since everybody knew that there was a pocket dimension here, they could simply avoid it. There was actually no real necessity to find out more details about the pocket dimension.

However, Lin Sanjiu quickly understood why Sajee raised that question. While she thought about the question for a few seconds, the girl had already sneaked up from behind her. The girl's hand was almost about to reach her back.

Before Sajee could edge her hand closer, two long sharp bones immediately swung out. It was so quick that she barely saw it moving. The sharp tips of the two viper-like bones flashed in front of Sajee.

"Oh gosh! Big Sister is so petty," she pouted. Following which, she took a deep breath as if she was inhaling a scent from Lin Sanjiu, "Well, I just have never seen those before."

Lin Sanjiu eyed her coldly but didn't warn the girl verbally.

Evidently, Sajee wasn't a girl that took any sort of verbal warning to heart.

The others looked once at the two girls and did not make any comments. They continued walking wordlessly. Among posthumans, it was common to just mind one's own business.

Apart from the noise they made, when someone accidentally kicked a pebble or when they were walking through the ruins, it was as if the only sound that remained in this vast land they were in was the sound of rustling grass as the wind bellowed. Cyber District was astonishingly large. When they looked back, it was as

if the tall skyscrapers belonged to another city.

After walking in this manner for a short time, the yellow sign gradually became clearer and clearer.

"Huh?" Faun stopped at the warning sign and tapped his hooves subconsciously.

Although he didn't specifically explain himself, the other posthumans more or less understood his reaction. Walking toward this boundary, they did not notice any hints of entering a pocket dimension. Seemingly, the boundary of the pocket dimension had shrunk this time.

"It is always better that it's shrinking rather than expanding, right?" the half-bark man said with a deep voice.

This was the first time that Lin Sanjiu heard someone speaking with such a low register. Hearing his voice made it feel as a person's innards would just sink down with that sound.

"Perhaps," Faun stared for a moment at the warning sign and turned to Lin Sanjiu. "You are the tallest here so you'll carry the sign."

Lin Sanjiu froze for a moment but didn't say anything. Anyway, she had more than enough strength. She immediately pulled out the warning sign from the ground and carried it over her shoulder; she did not convert it into her card.

"Alright, we'll start here. Be vigilant." Uncharacteristically, Faun continued with more words, "Each time the pocket dimension evolves, it can be completely different from the previous version so I don't have any point of reference for you guys. With that being said, we must not miss out any details regarding the pocket dimension."

Everyone became a little tense as they braced themselves. When they started moving again, they reduced their pace by quite a bit.

They continued walking for 20 to 30 minutes. Finally, all of them

were at a loss.

"Where is the pocket dimension?" the old Paleoindian couldn't help asking.

Looking around them, they were still in the vast, desolated land under the early morning sky.

Chapter 299: This “Fetus”

“Where is the pocket dimension hiding?”

Puzzled, the group of posthumans continued making a few rounds around the area. However, they were still unable to find any sign of the pocket dimension. The wild grass, gravel, and abandoned ruins were still exactly the same. No one spotted anything unusual.

Even though Faun was holding a pocket dimension detector, that had been mentioned by Reno and Rena, the small device remained silent throughout the journey. No matter how many times Faun restarted the device, it did make the beeping sounds which indicated that they were in a pocket dimension.

“Are we perhaps already in a pocket dimension? Maybe in this evolved version, the pocket dimension replicated the normal surroundings?”

After searching futilely for another 20 minutes, the man with half human skin and half tree bark finally raised a rather far-fetched possibility. His voice was as sonorous as before, it was so low that it made breathing a little harder for everyone.

“It isn’t impossible,” Faun muttered as he thought about the situation. Following which, he gestured to the team, “Let’s try to see if we can walk out of this vacant land... If we can’t, it will prove that we are already in a pocket dimension.”

This seemed to be the only feasible method now. Once again, the group of posthumans followed him and headed in the direction from where they came.

Even though it should come as no surprise, the team was somewhat astonished by the outcome. They managed to walk out of the vast empty piece of land without any hassle. They even walked past the area where the battles were previously. Just when

everyone was at a loss as to what to do next, a Smiling Mermaid member who was on guard duty peeked out and looked at them, surprised, "Why are all of you out so fast?"

Faun stopped walking. He was stumped and didn't know how he should answer that question.

He was not the only one, the team of posthumans behind him was also dumbstruck. After all, they were given a mission to explore a pocket dimension. Now that they couldn't even find the pocket dimension, would that mean that they wouldn't get the reward of 80 big crystals?

"Is it possible that the pocket dimension has disappeared?" Lin Sanjiu whispered to Mrs. Manas. She couldn't help thinking about the reward that she might lose soon. She sighed inwardly to herself and looked at the people around her. As expected, the others were also frowning and seemed dispirited.

However, her gaze froze when she saw someone.

The only person whose expression seemed out of place was that strange Sajee.

At that moment, the ragtag team of posthumans led by Faun was on the narrow road at the entrance of the battlegrounds. Following the road and passing a guard post on the way, they would reach the Smiling Mermaid base which was quite some distance away if they continued upward on the path. Whereas the other direction led to the vast piece of desolate land which supposedly housed the pocket dimension.

As Faun didn't know what he should do at the moment. Everyone stood silently behind him without moving. Sajee was the only one who ran up ahead, standing at a spot slightly ahead of Faun. She seemed a little anxious as she looked around her and shuffled her feet against the ground.

Her actions created a constant, annoying scraping sound as the

gravel on the ground rubbed against each other. The old Paleoindian couldn't tolerate it anymore, though he held back his anger, he finally shouted, "Stop shuffling!"

After he re-adjusted his tone, he looked back at the pair of dilated black pupils eyeing him, "Did you discover something?"

Sajee stared at him for a while and looked at the ground without saying a word.

The smile which previously seemed plastered on her face had disappeared without a trace at some unknown time. Without that expression which made her seem a little more human, her eyes which looked like two black holes looked rather scary, as if two white eyeballs would just roll out from them.

No one knew if she was agitated or anxious, but Sajee firmly scrapped her shoes against the ground once more.

As the old Paleoindian scoffed angrily, Lin Sanjiu suddenly felt a chill down her spine.

Perhaps, the others didn't notice the minute detail, but she saw everything.

There was a thick layer of dirt covering the brick pavement that they were on. Each time Sajee shuffled her feet, the tips of her shoes would stir up some bits of dirt. There was indeed nothing unusual about this.

However, when those bits of dirt fell, they seemed to suddenly display the ability to defy the laws of gravity.

As a small bit of fine dirt left the tips of Sajee's shoes, they disappeared in midair without a trace, as if they had suddenly disintegrated. Lin Sanjiu suspected that her eyes were playing tricks on her. But after half a second, she noticed that the dirt landed at a spot about 10cm further from Sajee. It looked so natural that it was as if it should have landed there.

Lin Sanjiu wouldn't have noticed that slight abnormality if she

didn't keep her eyes on Sajee as she had been guarding against that girl. Even now, the other people around her had not detected that aberration and were still having a discussion on the 80 big crystals.

Lin Sanjiu looked up and happened to find herself staring at a pair of tar-black pupils that were about to overtake the sclera around them.

"Do you know what's wrong here?" Lin Sanjiu asked with a serious tone after composing herself.

The old Paleoindian had asked a similar question just moments ago. Sajee suddenly laughed cheerfully. She didn't say anything but she stopped shuffling.

"I think there's something wrong with her," the old Paleoindian tapped his temple. "You probably won't get anything out of her," he said with a tone as if he shared the same adversary as Lin Sanjiu.

Sajee laughed again but she did not give Lin Sanjiu a reply. Instead, she turned to Faun and smiled, "Why don't you ask the guard if he noticed anything unusual?"

As she spoke, she gestured at the upslope path before them. However, her gesture was very strange. She did not stretch her arms, but she withdrew her elbow, like a chicken wing, and pointed at the guard post up ahead. Lin Sanjiu instantly realized that the girl intentionally avoided reaching out to the spot where the dirt had landed.

When Lin Sanjiu saw Faun nodding his head, and raising one of his hoofs to take a step forward, she got anxious. She shouted and grabbed Faun's cape. As the warning sign fell from her shoulder, Faun's hood was partially pulled down, revealing a delicate, handsome face with a puzzled expression.

"What... what's the matter?" He seemed very uncomfortable that people were looking at him. His fair skin rapidly turned red. He

quickly put his hood back on, "Don't randomly grab my clothes!"

Evidently, he did not notice the abnormality.

Lin Sanjiu shot a glance at Sajee who was beaming, feeling an inexplicable bout of anger. Just when she was about to interrogate the girl in front of everyone, something caught her gaze. She gasped quietly along with the other people around her.

The yellow warning sign which had slipped off her shoulder landed on the ground, incidentally, at the boundary where the dirt disappeared. The yellow sign suddenly dissolved in mid-air. After half a second, it appeared at a spot half a meter away. However, there was an unfathomable gap between the warning sign's board and its handle. Yet, in a blink of an eye, the handle had reattached itself to the board, as if what everybody saw was just an illusion.

"What... what's going on?" Faun asked in confusion before looking at Lin Sanjiu. After two seconds, he quickly turned his head to Sajee as if he had also caught the gist of the matter.

"Miss Sajee, shouldn't you tell us what you know?" Lin Sanjiu asked coldly.

After she said that, other members of the team stepped forward surrounding Sajee, who started looking left and right at the people around her.

"Hey, why are all of you so serious?" Sajee looked at the posthumans surrounding her. Then, she looked behind. She scratched her hair and said, "I didn't expect this either. I mean, I heard a rumor once and now it seems like it is true."

She stuck her tongue out. The tip of her tongue was white and not pink. "Alright. Alright. I'll tell you guys. Let me ask you a question. What is a pocket dimension?" Sajee smiled.

There was total silence for one second. The young man, in a Zhongshan suit who looked the most normal among them, answered, "From what we currently know, it is a sort of

apocalyptic world that failed to develop fully. For some unknown reasons, quite a few pocket dimensions adhere themselves to fully formed apocalyptic worlds, existing within them."

"That's right," Sajee opened up her arms as if she had already given them the answer, "See, you guys know this. Imagine a fetus that can't grow up. As it watches its brother grow up into a tall, strong youth, how could it simply accept its fate? Even if they don't want to resign to their fate, most of these 'fetus' can't do anything. However, this particular pocket dimension we found happens to be a little different. It is trying to imitate its 'brother', and it is slowly taking over its brother's territories..."

Ignoring the shell-shocked expressions of her listeners, Sajee continued with a grin, "We can consider ourselves lucky. The pocket dimension we entered is a Growth-type pocket dimension which had just awoken. Once it starts to supersede Red Nautilus, I really have no idea how it would impact the people affected by it... Huh? Why are you looking at me like that? Since there are Growth-type posthumans, naturally, there are also Growth-type apocalyptic worlds."

Chapter 300: Superficial Transformation

"In other words, this pocket dimension is in a sort of state where it is constantly expanding..."

Aside from Lin Sanjiu, who was the tallest, and had her large skeletal wings behind her back, the remaining people were sitting in a circle on the ground. They were all frowning and crossing their arms. Sajee was sitting in the center of the circle though she didn't seem to be concerned that she was trapped. The girl looked around with her pair of tar-black eyes but no one knew what she was actually looking for.

The young man in a Zhongshan suit and a middle part hairstyle muttered slowly, "But, the way it expands is quite strange."

After some close observations, they realized that the boundary of the pocket dimension was no longer the spot where the warning sign landed. After a few of them grabbed and threw some sand trying to test the new boundary, they finally discovered how the pocket dimension was using them.

"No, there must be some logic to this," the old Paleoindian knitted his long brows. "We might not know how apocalyptic worlds are formed, and why they exist. However, according to the physics law of energy conservation, an apocalyptic world would require energy to develop. Since this pocket dimension exists with Red Nautilus, there probably isn't enough latent energy here for it to develop into an independent apocalyptic world. Therefore, it needs to acquire energy from external sources to expand."

The young man in a Zhongshan Suit looked as if he wanted to add something to the conversation. His lips moved but he finally let out a sigh instead. From their discussions, they had already reached a clear conclusion: each time something from within the pocket dimension crossed its boundary, it would allow the pocket dimension to expand in the same direction.

After the old Paleoindian said those words, all of them suddenly kept quiet. They exchanged glances but no one uttered a blatantly obvious statement like, "If we don't throw anything outward, the pocket dimension will not expand."

As the wind blew noisily against her face and body, it tossed Lin Sanjiu's fringe. A few random strands of black hair hindered her vision so she pulled them away from her face and pushed them behind her ears. She let out a bitter laugh.

Even though there were many things they couldn't see with their naked eyes, there were all sorts of microscopic matter floating in the air, moving with the wind, allowing the pocket dimension to expand outward every second and every minute—

Unbeknownst to its inhabitants, Red Nautilus was slowly being consumed from the inside out.

To be honest, the team could be sure if they had ever managed to cross the boundary of that pocket dimension. However, now that they were aware of the current situation, none of them dared to test that possibility.

"It doesn't need us. Any time there is wind in this pocket dimension, it can expand non-stop," the Zhongshan suit youth sighed. He massaged his temples hard before turning to Faun who had been silent all this while, "If this pocket dimension is really attempting to take over Red Nautilus, this is a huge matter. You better inform your organization as soon as possible..."

Currently, the group of people was sitting in the middle of the road by the battleground. If they raised their voice, they could call the guard over. Since this affair affected Red Nautilus on a whole, their small group couldn't settle this. This might even be beyond what Smiling Mermaid could deal with, so Faun knew he needed to quickly report this to the upper echelons.

Faun, well-hidden in his cape, nodded. He stood up and faced the direction of where the guard was standing. The guard had been

looking at them curiously all this time because he did not get a response from the group. As a result, it made things easier for Faun.

"You! Go get—" he shouted.

He had only shouted those words when the wind around the group suddenly grew stronger. The air currents suddenly flowed much faster as they carried Faun's voice forward. Their hearts all skipped a beat. Before anyone could see anything, Faun had already finished yelling, —Steward Anka!"

The sound wave charged forward, penetrating the air like a tangible object. The wind whistled, tossing sand and dirt forward. A faint yellow line which demarcated the boundary of the pocket dimension sped forward rapidly, following the trajectory of Faun's voice, through the erratic air currents. It quickly reached the intersection beyond the upward slope and stopped just a few steps away from the guard before disappearing. All their faces turned dark.

Apparently, even sound waves which were generated within the pocket dimension could push the boundaries of this pocket dimension outward!

Faun stared blankly at the intersection before finally realizing what had happened. He didn't dare to say another word.

Everyone looked at each other for some time. Lin Sanjiu suddenly remembered something and quickly took out the paper and pens she had gotten from the library in the previous world. She handed them to Faun. Even though the situation regarding this pocket dimension was more complicated than they expected, shouting wasn't the only way they could get this information out.

Lin Sanjiu watched as Faun walked to the new boundary and signaled to the guard to stop moving. After that, he crouched down and started writing. Lin Sanjiu couldn't help sighing in her heart. She felt a little lost for a moment.

"What should we do next?" The young man in a Zhongshan Suit grimaced. Everyone felt more or less at a loss, "If this pocket dimension could expand with the movement of dust and sound waves, what on earth can stop it?"

"It isn't our responsibility to stop it. The big shots can worry about that," the half tree bark man gave him a sidelong glance before looking at the boundary of the pocket dimension, "I just want to know how we can get out."

For a few seconds, no one spoke. If the people from Smiling Mermaid were willing to help, they could experiment by letting a mouse or something enter the pocket dimension before chasing it out. However, even if that was not something difficult, there was no telling if Smiling Mermaid would do something like that for them or if they had other arrangements for their group.

The old Paleoindian looked around at everyone and spoke. It was hard to tell if he was being pessimistic or optimistic. Stroking some feathers from his war bonnet, he said, "It is too hard to stop this pocket dimension... But, once it takes over Red Nautilus completely, there is no need for us to get out. Anyway, it is just another apocalyptic world! Look. It had already occupied this area but there's nothing wrong. I think there isn't much of a difference even if we stay here."

Things were just as he had described.

If Lin Sanjiu didn't spot the strange occurrences happening at the boundary of the pocket dimension previously, she wouldn't be aware of the difference between where she was standing and a spot a few hundred meters away. Before Sajee acted in that strange manner, all of them even assumed that the pocket dimension had disappeared.

Just as this thought surfaced in Lin Sanjiu's mind, Sajee, who was sitting, started laughing at almost the same time. It caught everyone's attention and they all looked at her back.

"That's not true!" she slowly turned her head around. Her thick scarf wrapped her neck, blocking the view of shoulders' movements. It created an illusion as if she had turned her head 180 degrees, "Didn't I mention that the goal of this small pocket dimension is to replace this fully developed apocalyptic world? Perhaps, we can't see it now... But once it reaches a certain size, it will show it true form..."

As if to prove her words, Lin Sanjiu felt the ground beneath her feet suddenly "pulsing" a few times. It felt as if it was a throbbing vein of a large creature.

Their world turned upside down the next second.

After two massive skeletal wings grew from her back, considering her weight, Lin Sanjiu could not even conceive how she could be tossed into the air so easily. From her field of vision, she could see that the others were also tumbling in mid-air uncontrollably. It was as if they were ingredients that a chef was tossing in a pan. The ground trembled violently in an almost unimaginable way. It rumbled loudly. Finally, large fissures appeared and the ground was broken into countless small pieces. A gigantic creature slowly rose from the underground pushing aside the soil, gravel, and grass.

There was an explosive boom. The young man in the Zhongshan suit yelled out loudly in mid-air, "What is that! We're going to land on that thing!"

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